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REMARKS ON THE PREFACES TO *Dr. GEDDES's BIBLE.*

TWO SHILLINGS.

REMARKS

ON THE

PREFACES PREFIXED

TO THE

FIRST AND SECOND VOLUME

OF A WORK ENTITLED

THE HOLY BIBLE,

OR THE

BOOKS ACCOUNTED SACRED

BY

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS;

FAITHFULLY TRANSLATED, &c. &c.

BY THE

Rev. ALEXANDER GEDDES, L L. D.

IN FOUR LETTERS ADDRESSED TO HIM,

BY THE

Rev. John Earle.

Des ſçêmes ſçavans épargnez vous les frais
Et ces brillans diſcours qui n'eclairent jamais.

RACINE. Pöeme de la Religion. Chant. 5.

Your learn[ed] like the lunar beam, affords
Light but no heat; it leaves us undevout
Frozen at hea[rt] while ſpeculation ſhines.

NIGHT THOUGHTS, Night 5.

LONDON:

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M, DCC, [L]XX.

The prophet who ſhall be ſo preſumptuous as to ſpeak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to ſpeak—that prophet ſhall die.

Exod. c. 20. v. 21. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

We have ſeen, that God may converſe with a man who may yet live.

Exod. c. 20. v. 19. Ditto.

Moſes wrote all the dictates of the Lord.

Exod. c. 24. v. 4. Ditto.

LETTER I.

Occaſion of the preſent remarks—No intention to enter the liſts of controverſy—Reſpect for the age and acknowledged abilities of Dr. Geddes—Method which the author purpoſes to follow—Real object of debate inveſtigated—Contradictory opinions of Dr. Geddes concerning the Pentateuch—His fabulous interpretation of holy Scripture—His ludicrous treatment of Divine inſpiration—Futility and indecency of his attempts to ſupport his opinions.

REVEREND SIR,

WHEN the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles inſtructed his beloved diſciple Timothy in the duties of his miſſion, and charged him to *preach the word*, to *urge in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon*; to *reprove, beſeech*, and *rebuke*; we read, that he added: *for the time will come, when they will not bear ſound doctrine; but according to their own deſires ſhall heap to themſelves teachers, having itching ears; and ſhall turn away indeed their hear-*

ing from the truth, and ſhall be turned to FABLES *.

From comparing theſe impreſſive words of St. Paul with the general drift of the learned diſcourſes prefixed to your new verſion of the Bible, I was led to the obſervations, which I am about to make, in the preſent and ſubſequent letters.

I mean not to enter the liſts of controverſy with you. I have neither leiſure nor inclination to do it; and you have frequently expreſſed your contempt and abhorrence of them.

I pretend to no "ſuperior diſcernment or "ſuperior probity." I reſpect your age, I venerate your ſacred character, and ſincerely eſteem the eminent talents which you are known to poſſeſs.—But ſince you diſcover ſuch unparalleled zeal for *mythological*, or *fabulous*, interpretation of Holy Writ; —ſince you have taken ſo much pains, even thirty years labour and ſtudy, to depreciate the *five Books of Moſes*, in the opinion of the Chriſtian public, by queſtioning the *veracity* of their author; ſince you exhort us "to read you with patient attention, and

* 2 Tim. 4. v. 2, 3, 4.

"to

"to weigh your arguments in the ſcale of "reaſon *, devoid of *theological prepoſſeſ-* "*ſions*;" I will meet you on your own ground.—While I addreſs myſelf to you, in the ſimple, unaffected language of common ſenſe and experience, I will offer the public an opportunity of ſeeing your arguments in their true light, that they may read you devoid of *philoſophical prepoſſeſſions*; and I will make ſome pertinent remarks upon the proofs we have, reſpecting the *veracity* of the above mentioned books: that ſuch of your readers as are diſpoſed to examine farther into the truth, may diſcern where it lies, and decide accordingly.

Should any frankneſs of expreſſion appear, in the courſe of this little work, to exceed the rules "of temperance and cha- "rity †," which you preſcribe to your opponents, or ſhould repetitions now and then occur; I believe both will be found more imputable to the manner, and to the ſtyle, in which you have conducted the ſubject yourſelf, than to the leaſt intentional diſreſpect, or wilful negligence of mine.

* 2d Pref. p. v. † Ibid.

I begin, by obſerving, in your own terms, that "the writer of the Pentateuch does "not amuſe and tire his reader with long "metaphyſical diſcuſſions, ſubtile and in-"ſolvable queſtions; but with the greateſt "ſimplicity, and the moſt impoſing air of "conviction," confining himſelf to *matter of fact*, "tells us, that an Almighty Being "made thoſe heavens which we behold, "and this earth which we inhabit *."—I acknowledge the juſtneſs of this remark, and ſhall endeavour to avail myſelf of it, in my ſtrictures upon your prefatory diſcourſes.—The ſimplicity of this method, I preſume, will be its beſt apology.

For if there is, or ever was, any thing in the world, of which mankind can be ſaid to have, or to have ever had, certain knowledge; we need no long metaphyſical diſcuſſion, or ſubtilty of argument to prove, that it muſt be *matter of fact*. It ſtrikes every one, that impoſition, or colluſion, here, muſt, in the ordinary courſe of nature, be more difficult; and that there muſt be leſs room given for litigation.

* 1ſt Pref. p. ii.

Thus

Thus we have certain knowledge, that there *is* ſuch a man as *Kien-Long*, emperor of China; and that there *were* ſuch men as *Alexander*, king of Macedon; and *Auguſtus Cæſar*, ſovereign of Rome. We are credibly informed of many particulars concerning the firſt, from perſons who have lately travelled to China; and we know the lives and actions of the two others, from the hiſtorical teſtimony of *coeval* writers.

Upon the ſame principle it has been noted, by an extraordinary genius * of the laſt century, that, when a certain number of years had elapſed from the creation of the world, the Almighty was pleaſed to provide an hiſtorian, who may, in ſome meaſure, be called *coeval*; and a whole people were entruſted with the care of his hiſtory, in order to render it the moſt authentic in the annals of mankind; that all might be capable of learning an event, which it was ſo neceſſary for mankind to learn, and which they could not learn by any other means.—I do not pretend to give this out as a poſitive proof, (in your warmth of zeal

* Paſcal.

againſt ſuperſtition, you would call it canting hypocriſy), but as a judicious reflection upon the moſt ancient of all written narratives, and a narrative which thouſands and millions of men, in every age and in every nation, have invariably believed to be founded upon *matters of fact.*

Now admitting, as you do, that there really was ſuch a man as Moſes, that this man was the avowed chief of a great, though "a ſtubborn, turbulent and diſorderly peo-"ple, whom he wiſely and prudently con-"ducted out of Egypt;" admitting likewiſe, as you do, that this people "wandered "many years in the wilderneſs, before they "reached the land of Chanaan, and recei-"ved, during that interval, a code of laws, "which they *believed to be of divine origin,* "—laws ſo ſingularly interwoven with their "hiſtory, from their departure out of "Egypt, that it would be the wildeſt of all "fancies to imagine them the work of a "*poſterior forger,*—no one in his ſenſes," you ſay, "would have thought of ſuch a "forgery *:"—admitting all this to be *un-*

* 1ſt Pref. p. xii.

queſtionable

queſtionable fact,—what is the grand object of debate, in your prefaces to the firſt and ſecond volumes of your Bible?

In your firſt preface, you extol the "Pen-"tateuch, or five books of Moſes, as the "foremoſt in rank and in importance of all "the Hebrew Scriptures; as the great repo-"ſitory of the moſt remote antiquities, reli-"gion, polity, and literature of the Jewiſh "nation, to which, in all their poſterior "writers, there is a conſtant reference or "alluſion. To them the righteous judge, "the reforming prince, the admoniſhing "prieſt, the menacing prophet, perpetually "and uniformly appealed. They are books "which muſt be allowed, by competent "judges, to be an admirable compoſition, "and models of good writing, in ſome reſ-"pects unequalled,—in none overmatch-"ed, by the beſt productions of ancient "times. To rival the language of the Pen-"tateuch," you ſay, "was even in the moſt "felicitous periods of their ſtate, conſider-"ed as the higheſt effort of Hebrew geni-"us*." And yet, notwithſtanding theſe

* 1ſt Pref. p. i.

conceſ-

conceſſions, "you know not any certain "principle on which to ground a deciſion, "whether the ſix days creation (recorded "by Moſes with the greateſt ſimplicity, and "the moſt impoſing air of conviction) were "a real event, or only an *ingenious piece* of "*ancient mythology**."——

Speaking of original ſin, "you have not "the ſmalleſt doubt, that to adhere tena- "ciouſly to the letter was in the writer's "view; and, though this hiſtory has very "much puzzled both Jewiſh and Chriſtian "interpreters, you grant it has ſmoothly "glided down the ſtream of time as a moſt "orthodox and rational opinion, that the "Devil, in the form of a ſerpent deceived "the woman; or if it were a real ſerpent, "it was a ſerpent organized by the Devil. "—But you doubt whether the relation of "Moſes was founded upon real facts, or "*merely imagined* to account for known phe- "nomena." Nay, "you think it much more "than probable, that the Hebrew hiſtorio- "grapher did invent his ſix days creation, to "enforce the obſervance of the Sabbath;"

* 1ſt Pref. p. vi.

and,

and, as if this was a ſettled point, "may we "not," you triumphantly aſſume, "in like "manner, conſider his hiſtory of the *Fall* "as an excellent *mythologue*, to account for "the origin of human evil?—The ſerpent," you ſay, "will then be a *real mythological* "ſerpent,—will ſpeak like the beaſts and "birds in Pilpay or Eſop,—the whole chap-"ter will be an incomparable example of "Oriental Mythology,—and the authority "of ſcripture is by no means weakened by "this interpretation *."——

I paſs over your unſupported aſſertion, "that Philo's allegorical mode of explaining "the *fall*, and indeed the whole coſmogony, "was, with little variation, generally adopt-"ed by the more early Chriſtian fathers." I cannot reconcile it with candour; nor do I find it conſiſtent with what you have already acknowledged.—It is demonſtratively falſe, if we can believe an early Chriſtian father † whom you name without citing

* 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

† It is conſiſtent enough in the Doctor, not to cite the primitive Chriſtian father's words; when they are evidently againſt him. He has told his readers, "it "will not be expected, that he ſhould lay any ſtreſs "upon

citing his words (Clement of Alexandria*); and the known practice of all antiquity, in the

* Admonit. ad Gen. p. 6.

" upon their teſtimony. Although good and pious " men, they were in general very credulous; and too " apt to ſwallow Jewiſh tales." 2d Pref. p. xii.

Yet he can quote them accurately, when the queſtion is to dazzle the eyes of his readers. 2d Pref. p. viii. Thus " Clement of Alexandria abuſes moſt egregi- " ouſly the term *ſacred letters*," according to the Doctor; becauſe that father " ſays, they ſanctify and *deify*: " ἱεροποιουντα και θεοποιουντα." Admon. ad Gentes. p. 56.

But can any more *abuſe* be diſcovered here, than when the Doctor tells us, " we are all called to" ſanctity or " holineſs by the word of God: *Be ye holy, be-* " *cauſe I am holy?*"—2d Pref. p. vii. Is it more " exag- " gerative language" than that, which *appointed Moſes the God of Pharao*, Exod. c. 7. v. 1. or than that by which the *Judges* were ſtyled *gods*, to denote their dignity? Exod. c. 22. v. 8.—When words are *manifeſtly figurative*, however ſtrong the figure may appear, he need not " warn us againſt the danger of theological " meanings."—No one, except the Doctor, would have thought of ſuch a thing as literally turning men into Gods.

His object indeed is plain. He would have the whole ſcripture to be figurative and *fabulous*;—and who ſhall dare doubt of his ability to prove it?——

So intenſe has been his ſtudy of ancient writers,— ſo piercing

the adminiſtration of baptiſm is a complete refutation of it, by manifeſtly implying, or preſuppoſing the dogma of original ſin.

In your ſecond preface, you change your opinion. Inſtead of an admirable compoſition, and models of good writing, in ſome reſpects unequalled, in none overmatched, by the beſt productions of ancient times; "the Hebrew Scriptures," you ſay now, (not excepting the Pentateuch), "were "written in a rude age, by rude and unpo-"liſhed writers, in a poor uncultivated "language, with ruſtic ſimplicity, and gro-"teſque imagery *. They are erroneous, "inconſiſtent and abſurd †.—They are in-"explicable, and ſometimes ridiculous ‡.

piercing is his eye, and ſo penetrating his judgment, that he knows even their inmoſt thoughts! "So late as "the fifth century," he has diſcovered, that "even "the acute and critical Jerom, acquieſced," or "was "obliged to acquieſce, in opinions againſt his own "conviction!"—2d Pref. p. xii.

What a phænomenon in letters is Doctor Geddes!—"After this," who will preſume to enter the liſts of controverſy with him?—"Others may be capable of "ſuch Herculean taſks; but I candidly acknowledge "my diſability," and appeal to common ſenſe.

* 2d Pref. p. xiii. † P. xi. ‡ P. xiii.

"The

"The Hebrew hiſtorians," (not excepting Moſes, to whom the righteous judge, the reforming prince, the admoniſhing prieſt, the menacing prophet, perpetually and uniformly appealed), "like all other hiſtori-
"ans, wrote from popular traditions, and
"old ſongs *.—The doctrine of perpetual
"or unerring ſufflation †, in your mind,
"deſtroys their credibility throughout.—
"You contend for the doctrine of *partial*
"and *putative* ‡ *inſpiration*, from which ma-
"ny advantages may be derived againſt the
"adverſaries of religion.—We ſhould get
"rid of a vaſt and cumberſome load of uſe-
"leſs commentators. We ſhould no more
"need an endleſs tribe of *Harmoniſts*, *Con-*
"*ciliators*, *Antiologiſts*, &c. and the ſcrip-
"tures would be read and ſtudied by
"faſhionable ſcholars and the ſons of ſci-
"ence §."

After ſkilfully diſplaying the malicious objections which have been, or may be, made to ſome myſterious paſſages in the Pentateuch, and blinking, or at leaſt curtailing, I will not ſay garbling, the anſwers

* P. iii. † P. v.
‡ 2d Pref. p. xii. § P. xiii.

which

which have been returned to the former, and provided againſt the latter; you tell us, that "were there no middle option left "you, but either literally to believe all that "is written in the Pentateuch, (that admi- "rable compoſition, that model of good "writing), by whomſoever written, or deny "the Divine legation of Moſes;—you "would not long heſitate in forming your "determination,—you would deny the Di- "vine legation of Moſes *."——

Theſe are your words,—and this you call an "*honeſt declaration*, which, without "the gift of prophecy, you readily pre- "perceive will draw torrents of illiberal "abuſe and obloquy † upon your head."

I am not willing to diſpute your foreſight;—and I ſhall reſerve your *honeſt declarations* for a ſubſequent letter.—But, in the name of common ſenſe and experience, is this the way to recommend "books, ac- "counted ſacred, to faſhionable ſcholars, "and to the ſons of ſcience?"—Is not the foremoſt of your arguments evidently calculated, to draw torrents of illiberal abuſe

* 2d Pref. p. iv. † Ibid.

and obloquy upon the ſcriptures themſelves? What other concluſion muſt your readers draw, from the character which you have here inſinuated of Moſes?—Of what avail are all the pompous eulogies, ſo liberally beſtowed, "upon the admirable Pen-"tateuch;"—when you give us to underſtand, that the ſublimeſt parts of it are no better than ingenious fictions;—and that the authority of ſcripture is by no means weakened, though you put the ſcripture upon a level with writings, which never had any authority, namely, the fables of *Pilpay* and *Eſop*?

I confeſs, my aſtoniſhment at firſt reading this, in the long laboured and long expected work of a *Catholic Chriſtian* *, was great indeed!—I could hardly forbear exclaiming, with the preſident Feſtus in the Acts of the Apoſtles: *Thou art mad—Much learning turneth thee to madneſs!* Even now,

* "I am a Catholic Chriſtian, who believe all that "the Catholic Chriſtian Church has at all times be-"lieved and taught.——Honeſt open-eyed Catholic "reader, I truſt I have convinced thee."—Dr. Ged. late Addreſs, p. 22.

though

though ſufficiently acquainted with your philoſophic temper to be convinced, that you would coolly reply: *I am not mad, but ſpeak the words of truth and ſobriety*,—even now, I have my doubts; and may I not aſk you, Sir, in words of truth and ſobriety, and in the "language of temperance "and charity," to what purpoſe you are filling ſo many reams of paper, with curious lucubrations upon difficult paſſages in the Pentateuch?—When, after thirty years labour and ſtudy, you have "cut the maſter "knot" of every difficulty at once, by repreſenting its firſt author or compiler to be a mere Mythologiſt!—For who has yet dreamed of Pilpay or Eſop's being divinely inſpired?—And if we are to look upon Moſes as a man who wrote *fabulous hiſtory*, "from popular tradition and old ſongs"—to what purpoſe have you devoted ſo many of your precious days and nights?—Why have you exhauſted your health and ſtrength, in combating an endleſs tribe of *Harmoniſts*, &c &c. in refuting the reveries of Jewiſh Commentators, the knavery of Papiſts, or the ſimplicity of Proteſtants,—from which the dogma of original ſin has

" ſmoothly glided down the ſtream of " time?"—Why would you not ſuffer it to glide on*?—Why are you ſtill labouring to explode

* To ſatisfy every ſincere enquirer, and prove, that the dogma of original ſin, really was held not as " an orthodox opinion" only, but as a point of *public doctrine*, in the firſt ages; I beg leave to cite the words of Clement of Alexandria at length, who wrote in the ſecond century.———

" Το γαρ πονηρον και ερπυστικον θηριον——— " αικιζεται εισετι νυν τυς ανθρωπυς. Ο απατεων μεν " την Ευαν νυν δε ηδη και τυς αλλυς ανθρωπυς εις " θανατον υποφερων, &c."—

" That malicious creeping beaſt, *even now*, wreaks " his malice upon mankind. The deceiver of Eve is " *now alſo* leading men on to deſtruction, &c."——

Will a candid reader look upon the doctrine here delivered, reſpecting original and actual ſin, as a mere *fable* after the manner of Eſop?—That this primitive writer really does mean the evil Spirit, or *Satan*, in both theſe paſſages, is not only plain from the words juſt quoted, but more eſpecially from what follows in the ſame page: "Φευγωμεν υν, Αποστολικη πειθομενοι " παραγγελια, τον αρχοντα της εξυσιας τυ αερος, τυ " πνευματος τυ νυν ενεργυντος εν τοις υιοις της απει- " θειας και τω Σωτηρι τω Κυριω προσδραμωμεν."

" Let us flee, therefore, in obedience to the Apoſto- " lic precept, from the ruler of the power of the air, " the *ſpirit* who EVEN NOW worketh in the children of " unbelief;

explode the doctrine of *perpetual* or *unerring ſufflation* of holy Writ, and to inculcate the doctrine of *partial* and *putative inſpiration*, among the ſons of ſcience? The former of thoſe doctrines it is not eaſy to comprehend, in the manner you expreſs it; and the latter is perfectly unintelligible;—unleſs you mean the partial and putative inſpiration of Homer or of Heſiod, of Horace or Lucretius; and in that ſenſe it would be mere tautology,—Where is the uſe of all this? when, according to what you have hitherto ſaid, the primary queſtion ſhould be about the *honeſty* of your admired and injured Hero!—You dare not venture to make a formal enquiry into that part of his character; you gratuitouſly ſuppoſe him to have been an intereſted *diſſembler*, from the beginning; you take it for granted, that he is no other than a *mythological*, or *fabulous* writer;—and, upon the ſtrength of theſe ſuppoſitions, you doubt whether Moſes wrote *truth* or *falſehood*; you

" unbelief; and let us run to the Lord our Savi-
" our." ——

Clem. Alex. Admon. ad Gentes. p. 6. Edit. Paris. 1629.

criticiſe every ſyllable of his works; you preſume to pry into his thoughts, and to adjuſt his intentions; in your victorious and irreſiſtible career of learning, you traverſe all ages and all nations; you ranſack whole libraries; you ſcoff at all antiquity; you compile voluminous treatiſes;—you move heaven and earth! for what? why, to atteſt the wonderful diſcovery, which you have, at length, made for "the ſons of "ſcience:"—that *mythological*, or *fabulous*, writers do not always enjoy the high privilege of *unerring ſufflation!!!*

But leaving Mythologiſts deprived of "perpetual or unerring ſufflation," to vent their ſpleen in the words of Horace:

——— merito quin Jupiter *illi*
Ambas iratus buccas inflet.*———

and to conſole themſelves with their "par-"tial and putative inſpiration," in the beſt manner they can; what muſt "we Chriſ-"tians of the eighteenth century" think of *you*, Sir?—Is this the language of a grave divine writing comments upon the Bible? Is this the calm procedure of an ingenuous,

* Hor. Sat. lib. 1. ſat. 1.

unbiaſſed

unbiaſſed and unprejudiced philoſopher, in ſearch of truth? *Should not the multitude of words be anſwered?—Should a man full of* (ſuch) *talk be juſtified? Should thy* fabulous muſings *make men hold their peace? And when thou mockeſt, ſhall no man make thee aſhamed*?*

You will call this "illiberal abuſe, bitter "zeal,—gloomy fanaticiſm,—canting hypo- "criſy, or ſpiteful aſperity,"—to which you will only reply, "by thanking God, that "you are grown inſenſible to injuries," or you will ſay, "it is unmanly cenſure of "which you are perfectly diſregardful†," —and that "the greater part are beneath "your notice‡."——Indeed, Sir, without being preſumptuous, I think, I may venture to affirm, that I am as diſregardful of ungenerous and overweening cenſure, in my own reſpect, as yourſelf; and reckon it as far beneath *my* notice.—But I cannot be indifferent about the "honeſt fame," the uprightneſs and ſincerity of the firſt author, the firſt legiſlator in the world; whoſe "laws," you ſay, "the Jews believed to be "of Divine origin," and which are ſo

* Job, c. xi. † 2d Pref. p. iv. ‡ P. vii.

"ſingular

" ſingularly interwoven with their hiſtory,*" that both muſt ſtand or fall together; an author whom you deem fabulous, whom you ſuſpect of deceitful, and conſequently of unrighteous dealing,—and yet to whom, you acknowledge, "the righteous judge, " the reforming prince, the admoniſhing " prieſt, the menacing prophet, perpetually " and uniformly appealed," in the moſt awful concerns of religion, under the old teſtament;—and to whom, you know, ſimilar reverence has as conſtantly and as uniformly been paid, and is ſtill paid, by the moſt enlightened and judicious of mankind, under the new teſtament. — *Should men hold their peace*, for fear of being reckoned intemperate and uncharitable? — *And when thou mockeſt (at the ruler of thy people) ſhall no man make thee aſhamed?*

Remember, Sir, we are not diſputing here about ſcience, but *decency* and *propriety*.—I am hurt at being obliged to addreſs a learned Elder in this manner. It is your

* Sans conteſtation, le plus ancien livre qui ſoit au monde.——

Diſcours ſur l'Hiſtoire Univerſelle. 2. partie ſub init.

intemperate

intemperate language that has forced me to it.

Is this ſame decency then made
Only for *bunglers* in the trade?
May't, like the cobweb laws, be ſtill
Broke thro' by *great ones* when they will?
Proudly to ſeize on learnings throne,
And damn all (Biblic) learning but their own?

CHURCHILL.

Allowing that you have ſcrutinized the "great repoſitory of the moſt remote anti-"quities, religion, polity, and literature of "the Jewiſh people," with more penetration than the ancient fathers; allowing that you have ſtudied the oriental languages with more ingenuity and ſucceſs than your cotemporaries; (which I believe will be thought allowing rather more than is quite neceſſary; for though compariſons are odious, I ſhall not be accuſed of intemperance and uncharitableneſs, when I ſay, there are perſons in the eſtabliſhed Church of this nation, in the univerſities of Scotland, or even among your own brethren, whoſe ſplendid abilities, in the ſame line, are not totally eclipſed by yours);—but be that as it may, ut nihil dicam arrogantius, are *you alone*

alone competent to pronounce upon extraordinary events, that were related ("with "the greateſt ſimplicity and the moſt im-"poſing air of conviction") between four and five thouſand years ago?—Do you think it ſerviceable to the *Chriſtian body*, of which you profeſs to be a zealous member, —do you think it reaſonable, do you think it decent in you, to cite the "father of "Hebrew hiſtory" to your tribunal;—to *try* the venerable Legiſlator of the Jewiſh people; to diſpoſe of his thoughts and intentions, at ſo diſtant a period as the preſent; to *try* * him by the ſame rules of ſceptic and often pſeudo criticiſm, by which hiſtorians of inferior rank, and of a comparatively modern date are tried?—If you do think ſo,—in the opinion of many, at leaſt equal judges, you exemplify your own ſarcaſm againſt yourſelf: "that the fetters "of uſage are not eaſily broken, even when "that uſage is *tyrannical* †."——

Vide quam iniquus ſis, præ ſtudio, dum efficias id quod cupis.——TERENCE.

"But the day may come," and I hope it

* 1ſt Pref. p. xi. † P. xxii.

is

is not far off, "when the translator of the "Bible" will be a little more moderate,—or, since you have furnished me with the word, a little more *shackled* "than the trans-"lator of other ancient," and comparatively insignificant, "books;" if that translator has any *serious* regard for religion *, truth, and justice.

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* In concluding the preface to his *second volume*, where he is "sensible an apology is due "to subscribers, for *the very long delay* of its pub-"lication, the causes of which," we have the satisfaction to hear, "it is needless to rehearse,"—the Doctor informs us, that he "owes many "thanks to his learned friends and correspondents, "at home and abroad; but as he" humbly "trusts "their favours are not yet exhausted," (notwithstanding the confessedly *very long trial* of their patience),—he "shall *delay* his acknowledgments, "until he has completed his labours!"——

Query. Can any "learned friend or corres-"pondent, at home or abroad," (I mean at the same time, a friend to *religion*, *truth* and *justice*), think himself honoured by "apologies, acknow-"ledgments," or "tributes of gratitude," come when they may, from a writer who has publicly insulted all Christendom, by putting the

"HOLY

"HOLY BIBLE" upon a level with "ESOP's "FABLES?"——

As to the "Rev. Mr. STEPHEN STREET," of whoſe kind aſſiſtance, "a ſhort time before his "death," the Doctor makes *honourable mention*, —I have more "reſpect for his memory," more concern for "his widow and relations," than will permit me to believe, that he favoured the wild muſings, and "ultimately acquieſced" in the romantic opinions of Dr. Geddes, upon Holy Scripture!—I feel more reſpect for the numerous clergy of the eſtabliſhed churches of Great Britain and Ireland, than to think, that even *one* of them would do ſo.——

Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Honeſt declarations of Dr. Geddes conſidered—His Biblical ſyſtem expoſed from his own words—Scandalous conſequences of that ſyſtem—His frivolous diſtinctions—His vain endeavours to avoid cenſure—His apprehenſions of proſcription and perſecution—His preſumptuous hopes of approbation from the juſt, and reaſonable, and truly good—His illiberal inſinuations concerning the character of Moſes, as an hiſtorian—Digreſſion upon his abuſe of cotemporary writers—Apology for the author's warmth, and appeal to the candour of the public—Character of Moſes reſumed—Reaſons we have for believing the veracity of Moſes even as a ſimple hiſtorian.

FROM the ſhort ſketch of your opinions, which we have juſt ſeen,—from the turn of your motley arguments, as they lie ſcattered up and down in your prefaces, (which it would "puzzle" *the cleareſt head* to purſue, in any regular ſeries); it is impoſſible for a patient and attentive reader

not to conclude, that you conſider the author of the Pentateuch in the ſame light, as you do Ariſtæas, Joſephus, Philo, the Talmudiſts,—or any other ancient writer, whether "accounted ſacred" or profane.

It is true, you expreſs yourſelf ambiguouſly with regard to Moſes. "You cannot "altogether forget what you learned in "your years of pupillage *."—You may "believe," you ſay, "that Moſes was, in "in ſome ſenſe" (we have ſeen in what ſenſe) "inſpired as a legiſlator, without "granting, that he was, in any ſenſe, in-"ſpired as an hiſtorian †."—But preſently after, you claſs them all together. "Though "convinced of the general authenticity of "their narratives, you have cogent rea-"ſons," you ſay, "to ſuſpect the Jewiſh "hiſtorians," (without exception) "of ex-"ceſſive credulity, or deſigned impoſ-"ture ‡."—When difficult objections occur, "you do not ſee any other ſolution "that can be given but one: namely, to "acknowledge fairly and openly, that the "Jewiſh hiſtorians" (without exception) "in many places, put in the mouth of the

* 1ſt Pref. p. x. † 2d Pref. p. iv. ‡ P. v.

"Lord

" Lord words, which he never ſpoke; and " aſſign to him views and motives which he " never had *."—But this will not ſuffice. " You ſtop not even here. Let the apoſtle " Paul be ſuppoſed to ſay, that" (ſo far from being the work of impoſture) " the " whole Jewiſh canon is divinely inſpired, " —you would not for that give up your " opinion. You would ſay, that the word " inſpiration, in the language of Paul, muſt " have a different meaning from that " which our divines have affixed to it.— " In ſhort, *you would ſay any thing*, rather " than believe, even upon the authority of " Paul, ſuch doctrine as theirs. To uſe " the emphatical language of the juſt " mentioned Apoſtle, you could not be- " lieve ſuch inſpiration, were an angel " from heaven to teach it †."——

Sic ſtat ſententia.

Theſe are your " honeſt declarations."

God only knows your private thoughts. I judge you not; neither have you any right to judge me.—I think you have miſ-repreſented the ſubject, which you under-

* 2d Pref. p. iii. † P. xi.

take to diſcuſs. But whether from vincible or invincible ignorance, whether deſignedly, or undeſignedly, it is far from my intention to pronounce. I have not put into your mouth words, which you never ſpoke; nor will I aſſign to you views and motives, which, perhaps, you never had.—I leave them to yourſelf, and to the great Searcher of hearts. You have given us your word of honour, which it would be illiberal to diſpute.—You have publiſhed your *honeſt declarations*, and, of courſe, the *criterion* of your *Biblical Syſtem*. We are "ultimately to acquieſce * in your opi-"nion," that there are "cogent reaſons to "ſuſpect the Jewiſh hiſtorians of exceſſive "credulity, or deſigned impoſture;"—and conſequently, as Moſes was the principal among them, we have "cogent reaſons to "ſuſpect," that he was an arrant cheat, an ambitious impoſtor, who deceived the Jewiſh nation with *pious frauds* and *fictitious miracles*;—that he fabricated all the marvellous facts we read, in the books of *Geneſis* and *Exodus*, in order to ſubjugate the

* 2d Pref. p. v.

people

people to his code of laws (which he made them believe were of divine origin), and in thoſe laws ſubjugate them to himſelf, by perſuading them, that he was commiſſioned from heaven;—that he was the interpreter of the will of God; and had the power of God put into his hands, to puniſh thoſe who ſhould dare to reſiſt.——

Such are the immediate inferences, which "faſhionable ſcholars, and ſons of ſcience," muſt unavoidably draw from your *honeſt declarations!*—And could you imagine, that "many of your honeſt, open-eyed Catholic "readers would, probably, be thankful, for "your not having taken a freer range *?" —And could you cheriſh the fond hope, that a *verſion* of the Bible, uſhered into the world with ſuſpicions of this caſt, and with comments of this tendency, would "anſwer "your expectations, which you confeſs, "are not ſmall †?" Could you imagine, that by "wiſhing to diveſt yourſelf of pre-"judices ‡," while you rekindle the flames of controverſial animoſity, ſuch a tranſlation would be every where applauded and

* 1ſt Pref. p. xxii. † P. xx. ‡ P. x.

patroniſed, from motives of "temperance "and charity," and that the Chriſtian "public would receive it with indul- "gence *," becauſe a few harmleſs gram- matical miſtakes, or typographical errors had been corrected?——

Ah! ne'er ſo dire a thirſt of glory boaſt.

POPE.

For upon the ſtricteſt and faireſt valuation of your learned labours, in the Engliſh text, I believe it will be found, "by com- "petent judges," that you have done little or nothing more; at leaſt nothing that wears the ſmalleſt appearance of utility †.—

In

* 2d Pref. p. xvii.

† If in ſome parts of the verſion there be found improvements, in how many others is our language deformed with Scotticiſms?——May it not ſeem likewiſe, that the ſubſtitution of the ludicrous words *ſkip-offering* for *paſſover*, *godſhip* for *divinity*, (as well as *ſufflation* for *inſpiration*, which we have ſeen in the Doctor's ſecond preface),—and the uſe of the word *gonorrhea*, cum multis aliis, could only be intended to burleſque the ſacred writings?— Moreover, what judgment will candour pronounce on the induſtry which is employed to give to every paſ- ſage, which has hitherto been believed to relate to Jeſus Chriſt, a meaning which can have no reference

to

In vain do you endeavour to prevent the ſcandalous inferences, which you have juſt heared, and to ward off the imputation of impiety, by frivolous and unmeaning diſtinctions; by telling us, for example, "that you ſpeak of the Hebrew writers "conſidered as hiſtorians *, and that their "legiſlator and their prophets, properly ſo "called †, are here out of the queſtion."

You

to him: and that in contradiction to his own expreſs declaration, that in the law of Moſes there are things written concerning him?—See a remarkable text, Deuteron. c. 18. v. 17, 18, 19. *And the Lord ſaid to me* (Moſes) *I will raiſe up a prophet out of the midſt of their brethren like to thee: and I will put my words in his mouth, and he ſhall ſpeak all that I ſhall command him. And he that ſhall not hear his words which he ſhall ſpeak in my name, I will be the revenger.*—All this the Doctor applies to "a ſucceſſion or ſeries of prophets."

See alſo Letter III. p. 63.

* 2d Pref. p. iv.

†With regard to theſe prophets, whether "properly" or improperly "ſo called," we have a ſufficient ſample of his reſpect for them, in the preface juſt cited: p. xv. He there tells his readers: "the royal pro-"phet David is ſaid, in the Scripture, to have been *a* "*man according to God's own heart:* but *this* cannot "without *impiety* be ſtrictly underſtood."—If they preſume to aſk him why ſo?—He anſwers, becauſe

"*this*

You told us, in the firſt page of your firſt volume, that "judges, princes, prieſts, and "prophets, perpetually and uniformly "appealed to the Pentateuch;" and you told us, a few pages after, "that the law "and the hiſtory," which it compriſes, "are ſingularly interwoven:" therefore if you ſuſpect the hiſtorian of the Pentateuch to be a credulous or deſigning impoſtor, the legiſlator muſt be ſuſpected too; and if you make judges, princes, prieſts and prophets, perpetually and uniformly appeal to that book, which you ſuſpect of impoſture,—pares cum paribus, you make them all impoſtors together; and your diſtinction is good for nothing.——

In vain do you ſtrive to ſhun the cenſure of profaneneſs, by "criminating your "fellow renderers on the continent*," by pretending to "diveſt the adverſaries of "religion of their moſt formidable offen-

"*this* is only an oriental," or a Jewiſh "exaggera-"tion."——

——— ab uno
Diſce ommes.
VIRGIL.

* 1ſt Pref. p. xxii.

"ſive

"five weapons *;" by talking "of the ad-
"vantages that might be derived from an
"apology for the Bible founded upon your
"principles †;" by boasting of "judicious
"criticism, of the number of manuscripts
"which you have consulted, and of the full
"and fair image which you give of your
"prototype ‡;" by amusing us with the
"colour and complexion of its composi-
"tion §;" by informing "your readers, that
"they will meet with an incredible number
"of prodigies, which they need not lite-
"rally believe; and a most frequent inter-
"position of the Deity and his agents,
"which it is not necessary to admit; and
"which a slight acquaintance with the geni-
"us of the eastern nations and their idioms
"will readily enable them to explain ‖."
We have only your word for this; and surely, Sir, you will not think *us* so excessively credulous, as to believe all this upon your bare word! Μη γενοιτο!——

In vain do you endeavour to excite compassion, for the same purpose, by la-

* 2d Pref. p. xii. † Ibid.
‡ 1st Pref. p. xx. § 2d Pref. p. v. ‖ P. xiii.

menting

menting, "that your work will, moſt pro-
"bably, be proſcribed, and your perſon
"perſecuted, as far as proſcription can take
"place and perſecution dares be avowed,
"in a land of liberty;" by crying out, that "Proteſtant will contend with Papiſt, "which ſhall throw the firſt ſtone at you, "and contribute his reſpective portion of "wormwood and venom, to embitter and "poiſon the cup to be preſented to your "lips *."—Alas! my dear Sir, you have already prepared the embittered and poiſoned cup, with your own hand. There is no need of all this buſtle of Proteſtants and Papiſts, to throw ſtones at you.—You have proſcribed and perſecuted, you have pelted and poiſoned your *Catholic Chriſtian* reputation yourſelf.—It ſeems as if you had taken the hint of a flimſey pamphlet, that appeared againſt you, a few years back, in the *character of a Few* †:

Ita apertè *ipſam rem* modo locutus, nihil circuitione uſus es.——TERENCE.

In

* 2d Pref. p. iv.

† I am far from abſolutely condemning that publication.—Quæro aurum in ſtercore Ennii. With all its

In vain do you "wiſh and eagerly look, "for the approbation of the juſt, and rea- "ſonable, and truly good of every party*." —I am thoroughly perſuaded, there is no party, no Chriſtian ſect, in this country or in any other, ſo void "of diſcernment, of "candour, and of probity," as to think it juſt, and reaſonable, and truly good, to acquieſce in your *honeſt declarations* upon the Bible;—when you have openly declared, that you have cogent reaſons to ſuſpect its writers of *deſigned impoſture!*——It is for the ſake of all parties, and for "the ſake "of truth," and eſpecially for the ſake of your readers, that, while I eſteem and reſpect your perſon, "I expreſs myſelf, in "ſo explicit and unreſerved a manner," againſt theſe your *honeſt declarations*; "and "am now going to ſupport my ſentiments" againſt them "with proofs, which," though they may not have the attraction of novelty, "I deem unanſwerable;" at leaſt, for any thing you have ſaid.

its weakneſs, it contains ſome things, which Dr. Geddes, with all his ſtrength, will not be able to refute.

* 2d Pref. p. v.

Firſt of all, I beg leave to remind you of an axiom univerſally admitted, both in philoſophy and divinity, that when any important point has once been eſtabliſhed, by ſolid and rational arguments, it ought not to be given up, on account of difficulties which may afterwards occur.

Thus our belief of a firſt cauſe, of a ſupreme Being, ought not to be abandoned or weakened, on account of certain difficulties, which ariſe from our imperfect notions concerning the exiſtence of natural and moral evil.

Now admitting this axiom, (which is equally true in the preſent caſe, without ſetting Moſes on a level with the Almighty),—I ſay, that as we have intrinſic evidence of Moſes being a wiſe, a prudent, a conſcientious and *pious* * man; as you have acknowledged ſuch qualities in him yourſelf, from a minute, critical ſurvey of his laws and ordinances, in ſix or ſeven quarto pages †; and I am willing to give you credit for your ſincerity in acknow-

* 2d Pref. p. iv.

† 1ſt Pref. pp. xii. xiii. xiv. &c.

ledging

ledging them: the objections which have been ſo often and ſo ably anſwered *, and which you bring forward again with ſo much pomp, are not ſufficient to impeach his character already eſtabliſhed.——

"Weigh your arguments in the ſcale of "reaſon."—Have you "reaſons cogent" enough to reconcile the virtues of wiſdom, prudence, conſcientiouſneſs and piety, allowed in your firſt preface, with the black and blaſphemous impoſture inſinuated in your ſecond preface †; that Moſes, (like the convicted impoſtor Mahomet), "put in "the mouth of the Lord, words which the "Lord never ſpcke, and aſſigned to him "views and motives, which he never had?" When even your *Samaritan copy* denounces the ſentence of death, againſt the preſumptuous prophet who ſhould dare to do ſo ‡! —Is this "the language of temperance "and charity?"—Is this to "be received "with indulgence?"——The learning of Celſus, and Porphyrius, "the erudition of "Freret,—the ſenſe of Bolingbroke,—the

* Apology for the Bible, p. 14, &c. † P. iii.
‡ Exod. 20. v. 21. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

" declamations of Diderot, the ſcurrility of " Boulanger,—the ſarcaſms * of Paine," have produced nothing more derogatory to the character of this venerable hiſtorian, and, at the ſame time, more futile and malicious than the *honeſt declarations* of Dr. Geddes.

If, " without the gift of prophecy, you " could readily *preperceive* the torrents of " illiberal abuſe, which you were drawing " upon your head,"—and did not *preperceive* the conſequences, which muſt inevitably be drawn from your diſcourſes; you muſt be a weak man, and unfit to explain the Bible: if you did *preperceive* them, and ſtill make a merit of perſiſting in, what you call, your *honeſt declarations*; let me tell you, Sir, in " a land of liberty," and delicate as you are upon the point of honour, you have no right to faſten opprobrious epithets upon any body elſe. The " ſcur- " rility of Boulanger," and " the ſarcaſms " of Paine," as you term them, are not more ſhocking or diſguſting to a ſincere Chriſtian, whether Proteſtant or Papiſt,

* 2d Pref. p. xii.

than

than your raſh and intemperate language. —When Paine thought proper to call Moſes "an arrogant coxcomb, a ſtupid "pretender to authorſhip, and his works a "book of fables, contradictions and lies;" Paine was, at leaſt, conſiſtent with his own principles.—But you affect to honour and revere an illuſtrious perſonage, whom you perpetually inſult. You are inconſiſtent enough to ſay, that "you know, you think, "to appreciate the value of the Hebrew "writers, and you value them not the leſs,* "becauſe you deem them not divinely "inſpired; and have cogent reaſons to "ſuſpect them of deſigned impoſture †!"—

If you are diſpleaſed with me, for publiſhing theſe reflections; if you are offended at the company in which you are now placed, and at the abuſe they utter; if you complain of being ranked with "*apoſtates*, "*heretics*, *infidels* ‡, and every other odious character;" it is not my fault.—You choſe ſuch company; when you joined in their abuſe; when you made yourſelf the echo of deiſtical declaimers; ſome of whom you

* 2d Pref. p. xii. † P. v. ‡ P. iv.

have complimented with the imputation of *ſcurrility*,—and when you improved upon their ſcurrility, in ſeating Moſes by the ſide of *Pilpay* and *Eſop* *.——

——— Sume ſuperbiam
Quæſitam meritis.
HORACE.

I beg pardon of your polite readers for this warmth. At the ſame time, I appeal to the candour of thoſe readers, whether it is not provoking in the extreme, to hear a profeſſed admirer of the Bible inſult its chief authors, and wound their fair character, in a part where this admirer is ſo vulnerable, and diſcovers ſuch exquiſite ſenſibility himſelf,—namely, his *honour* and his *faith?*—I appeal to the religious knowledge of thoſe readers, whether it is not a juſt and an appoſite obſervation of the French poet:

——— *Que* tout libertinage
Marche avec ordre, et ſon vrai perſonage
Eſt de gliſſer, par degres, ſon poiſon
Des ſens au cœur, du cœur a la raiſon?——
J. B. ROUSSEAU, Lettre a M. RACINE.

* 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

But

But to return from this involuntary digreſſion, which neceſſity alone extorted,—I ſay, in the ſecond place, that Moſes being "wiſe and prudent * in conducting the "Iſraelites," if he really had intended, as you inſinuate, "to enforce the obſervance "of the Sabbath," by deceiving the people with ingenious fictions; he would certainly have contrived to do it, in a way that might not expoſe him to immediate detection. This is the leaſt you can allow. Whereas he did quite the reverſe. Had he attempted to impoſe upon the Jewiſh public with *pious frauds* and *fabulous legends*, in the circumſtances he then ſtood, and in the manner he then proceeded; there was not a Jew living but might have detected the cheat, and have deſtroyed all his credit for ever.——

To inſtance only one or two examples at preſent, why did he "trace the firſt lines of "his hiſtory with ſo rapid a pencil" as you remark †?—What could induce him to repreſent the lives of the firſt men ſo very long, during a period which, you ſay, "ac-

* 2d Pref. p. iv. † 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

"cording to the loweſt calculation, is of "1307 years *,"—and yet reckon ſo few generations?—Impoſtors are uſually fond of concealing their tricks; and had Moſes been a fabulous writer, an ambitious and deſigning impoſtor, as you repeatedly inſinuate, it was in his power to have wrapped up his fables with ſecurity, as the Chineſe hiſtorians have envelopped theirs, in a multitude of anterior generations; but he could not do this, among the few which he introduced.—You know perfectly well, Sir, it is not ſo much the intervening number of years, it is the confuſion of families, it is the multiplicity of undiſtinguiſhed races, that contribute to embroil hiſtorical facts, and to favour deception.—Hiſtorical truth, like every other truth, is one and uniform. It is only disfigured and obſcured by the ſucceſſive and rapid change of men.—And yet in the very beginning of his narrative, "with the greateſt ſimplicity, and the moſt "impoſing air of conviction," the author of the Pentateuch has placed two of the moſt remarkable facts, or events, that were ever

* 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

thought

thought of, I mean, the creation, and the deluge, ſo very near, by the ſmall number of generations which he accurately deſcribes, from both thoſe periods, and whoſe immediate and regular deſcendants were living when he wrote; that if his account were not true, it muſt have been to aſſert what would have been immediately contradicted, by the memory of the whole people to whom he addreſſed himſelf?—Is this the conduct of a fabulous writer?——

Again, why did he openly declare his own faults,* which he might have eaſily diſſembled?—Why did he aſſign the whole dignity, both of the government and the prieſthood, to others†, and reduce his own poſterity to the ſimple rank of Levites?—Is this the conduct of an ambitious impoſtor?—*Ambition ſhould be made of ſterner ſtuff*;—and impoſture, ſo ill managed in traditional information, was not, I preſume, very likely to ſucceed, when extraordinary actions and events were related, which were performed before thouſands of ocular witneſſes, and in which deception muſt have

* Deuteron. c. 33. † C. 34.

been

been utterly impoſſible; as will be ſhown in its proper place.

Did we then follow your advice for a moment, and "conſider the hiſtory of the "Pentateuch as a mere human compoſi-"tion*;" independently of revelation, we ſhould not only have reaſon to believe, that the author was ſincere in what he ſaid, but that the facts which he relates were authentically delivered down, from father to ſon†, and from age to age, to his own time; and that the hiſtory of England, the hiſtory of the Norman conqueſt, or of the laſt revolution, is not better known to us, than the hiſtory of events, recorded in the Pentateuch, was known to the cotemporaries of Moſes.——

Have we ſolid grounds for believing this?—Moſt undoubtedly we have. And though I mean not to inform *you*,—though I look up to you as to a perſon of real genius, and great information,—who could have taken the other ſide of the queſtion

* 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

† Aſk your fathers, and they will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you.

Deuteron. c. 32. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

with

with as much eaſe, and certainly with more edification to thoſe of your own communion, as well as to the Chriſtian public at large, than that in which you are actually engaged; yet, for the ſake of your readers, I will produce ſome of the arguments we have for believing the facts recorded by Moſes, even as a ſimple hiſtorian; and I will endeavour to confirm them upon principles, which appear to me, indubitable; or, at leaſt, infinitely more probable than your ſuſpicions of diſſimulation and impoſture.

In reality, Sir, without entering into "long metaphyſical diſcuſſions, about the "nature of the univerſe, the generation of "matter, cauſe and effect, time and eter-"nity, and ſuch other ſubtile and inſolva-"ble queſtions*,"—but to proceed in the language of common ſenſe and experience, intelligible to every reader,—muſt it not appear infinitely more probable, to an inſtructed Chriſtian, and more rational to hold, that the firſt man created was endowed with underſtanding, with moral perception,

* 1ſt Pref. p. ii.

and

and with the gift of ſpeech,—than to believe, with ancient and modern freethinkers, that the primeval parents of human kind were mere ſavages?—Is not the Moſaical hiſtory of our origin more analogous to known phenomena, than the dreams of ancient and modern ſceptics*, who imagine (in oppoſition to the very ſtructure of our frame) that we originally crawled upon the earth, like four footed beaſts, without any other mode of communicating our feelings, without any other means of ſubſiſtance, than thoſe which were equally enjoyed by the wolf and the tiger?——

In

*" Cum prorepſerunt primis animalia terris,
" Mutum et turpe pecus———
" Unguibus et pugnis———
" Pugnabant———
" Donec verba, quibus voces ſenſuſque notarent
" Nominaque invenere."

HOR. lib. 1. ſat. 4.

" The choirs of birds, who whiſtle and ſing, or " ſcream at one another, or the herds of beaſts who " bleat and lowe, or chatter, and roar at one another, " have juſt as much meaning," (as when men talk together) " and communicate it juſt as well; at leaſt " I preſume ſo.——All of them ſeem to have ideas,

" and

In ſpite of all the "critical and philoſo-"phic pens," which have been employed to propagate theſe notions,—in ſpite of all the recent efforts to enforce them, eſpecially among our unfortunate neighbours,—does not the human mind recoil with horror at the thought?—I appeal to yourſelf.—If I grant, that "the Moſaical hiſtory "has very much puzzled * both Jewiſh and "Chriſtian interpreters," and that we have no phyſical demonſtration of the truth; is it not *more than probable*, is it not highly rational to believe, that Adam was a man of good ſenſe and underſtanding; that he was enabled to inſtruct his children; that he taught them what he knew, concerning the creation of the world;—that he acquainted them with his *fall*, with his puniſhment, and with the dogmas of religion?—In points of ſuch remote antiquity, ſuppoſing the balance were equal (which I cannot conceive to be the caſe here),

"and theſe ſeem often to be better determined in the "birds and beaſts than in men."——

Philoſophical writings of Lord Bolingbroke, vol. iii. pp. 422, 423.

* 1ſt Pref. p. vii.

ſhould

ſhould we not prefer what is honourable to our nature, before opinions which are humiliating, debaſing, and degrading?——

Theſe important events, therefore, were taught by our firſt parents;—and I will maintain it, till you, or your friends, ſhall prove the contrary.—They were tranſmitted down to Noah by Lamech, who lived fifty-ſix years with Adam; and above all by Mathuſalem, (or as you write it, Mathuſelah) who had ſeen Adam two hundred and three years*, and who died a few days previous to the deluge.—Noah conveyed the account of theſe great events to his poſterity, by the means of Sem and his other children. So that, allowing "the "fabulous tales and old ſongs" of barbarous and idolatrous nations, to have obſcured and perplexed the truth,—the real tradition might ſtill be faithfully preſerved, even down to Abraham, the ſon of Terah, and grandſon of Nahor.—And if we recollect, that Abraham lived an hundred and fifty years with Sem,—we ſee, that he might eaſily have learned theſe intereſting facts

* See Gen. c. v. and vi.

from

from him, together with the worſhip which the Almighty required, before the flood.

Moreover, if we purſue the hiſtory of Abraham down to Moſes, (which you allow to be "carried on in a pretty regular ſeries, "and written in, to you, a moſt enchanting* "ſtyle; though you will not pretend to ſay, "that it is entirely unmixed with the leaven "of the Heroic ages: to require this," you tell us, "would be unreaſonable†;") were not the cotemporaries of Moſes, ſome of them at leaſt, capable of converſing with Joſeph, whoſe father and whoſe grandfather had ſeen Sem? Had not Moſes Amram for his father? And were not his

* When the Doctor vouchſafes to approve of certain paſſages in the ſacred text, it is in a manner peculiar to himſelf.—For example, he ſtyles the book of Ruth, "the *little pleaſant ſtory of Ruth*;" but thinks, "if David had never aſcended the throne, it would "moſt probably never have been written."—He ſpeaks of "bits of poetry," and "riddles," and is remarkably fond of them. "The Song of Hanna" he calls a pretty bit of patch-work, or a "*pretty hymn*, "*patched* up out of different *ſcraps* of Holy Writ;" and from it, he kindly informs us, "the *Magnificat* "of Mary in Luke is partly borrowed."—See 2d Pref. p. xvi. and p. xvii.

† 1ſt Pref. p. xi.

regularly continued anceſtors Levi, Abraham, Sem, and Mathuſalem, &c.?—Were not the lives of the ancient patriarchs long enough for the above mentioned facts to be learned from them, and for the whole uninterrupted ſeries of genuine tradition to be preſerved in their memories?—We may even preſume, that they had no other method of preſerving the knowledge of hiſtorical tranſactions; ſince we diſcover no veſtige of writing anterior to Moſes: nor have we any certain information, whether that art was, in any ſhape, invented at the period of the deluge.——

It is plain, therefore, to an unprejudiced mind, that Moſes might have learned the hiſtory of the world from his cotemporaries.—Hence, according to the judicious reflection of *Paſcal* *, he may, in ſome meaſure, be called a coeval writer; and conſequently, as all your laboured arguments, againſt the veracity of the Pentateuch, are built upon *ſtudied difficulties, chronological conjectures, tropological fancies,* and *grammatical niceties,*—your "ſuſpicions

* Penſées, p. 73.

"of

"of designed imposture" have no more foundation in truth when applied to Moses, than similar suspicions would have, if applied to Livy, Cæsar, or Cornelius Nepos. —The argument appears, to me, decisive; because Moses had the same natural means and opportunities, of writing a faithful history, as these authors had; and because the same principles, which lead us to believe the veracity of their writings, must at least equally lead an unprejudiced person to believe the veracity of his.——

LETTER III.

Remarks upon the divine legation of Moſes—Middle option of Dr. Geddes, between belief and unbelief, no ſign of reſpect—His middle option compared with his putative inſpiration, and proved to be a tautological phraſe for the ſame idea—His ſtatement of the queſtion, concerning Moſes, captious and erroneous—His grammatical ingenuity delaſive—His ſuſpicions of credulity and impoſture ſhewn to be unfounded,—and the divine legation of Moſes confirmed from the impoſſibility of deception.

HAVING ſhown the raſhneſs of your ſuſpicions, concerning the Pentateuch, and the indecent liberties which you have taken, with the character of its venerable author, conſidered as an hiſtorian; having proved, that he is entitled to as much credit for the facts he relates, as any other writer,—from the ſimilar reſources of which he was poſſeſſed: I proceed to conſider him as a Lawgiver; and to offer a few

a few obſervations upon the proofs we have of his *divine miſſion*, which you treat with ſo little ceremony.

I ſay, the divine miſſion of Moſes, which you treat with ſo little ceremony.—For "your * middle option," as you call it, between belief and unbelief of his divine legation, is no mark of reſpect.—I cannot help conceiving it as a mere *ſalvo* again, to avoid the cenſure of open impiety. Juſt as you ſubſtitute the word *Hebrew writings; Jewiſh hiſtory*, and *oriental mythology*, inſtead of Holy Scripture. Theſe artful fetches may amuſe a young "faſhionable "ſcholar;" but they will not ſatisfy an attentive enquirer. — I have "read you "with patient attention;" and "weighed "your arguments in the ſcale of reaſon;" I have compared your "middle option" with your "putative inſpiration;" and it appears to me, at beſt, a tautological phraſe for the ſame idea.—To juſtify this remark, it is not neceſſary to remind your readers, that "you have long been accuſtomed to "think for yourſelf, upon every ſubject that "has come before you †; that you have

* 2d Pref. p. iv. † 1ſt Pref. p. x.

" ever been accuſtomed to think for your-
" ſelf; that you will ever continue to think
" for yourſelf; and that as often as you
" ſhall have occaſion, you will write and
" ſpeak as you think *:"—even when you would ſeem piouſly to *believe*, that Moſes was, " in ſome ſenſe, inſpired, as a legiſla-
" tor,"—you take care to inform us, in a note, that " you are far from *thinking* he
" was ſo, even as a legiſlator, in the ſtrict
" and abſolute theological meaning gene-
" rally annexed to the word inſpiration †."
—Hence, if there be any abſolute and ſtrict meaning annexed to your words, in the paſſage I have quoted, as it is not a *theological*, it muſt be a MYTHOLOGICAL meaning: conſequently the " middle op-
" tion" of belief, which you apply to Moſes as a legiſlator, muſt be referred to the " putative inſpiration," which you allow the ſacred writers in general. And what is that? why, an inſpiration which is ſuppoſed to ariſe from *art* and *genius*; you believe them to be inſpired like *Pilpay* or *Eſop*; that is to ſay, you believe a ſort of

* Dr. Ged. Addreſs, p. 1. and 2.

† 2d Pref. p. iv.

middle

middle inſpiration, which viewed in a theological, or religious light, you muſt allow to be *no inſpiration at all*;—and your "middle option" vaniſhes with it.——

Thus modern Sophs, with fluent ſpeech
Do various mighty nothings teach;
And when, in fancy's chariot hurl'd,
We have been carried round the world,
Involv'd in error ſtill and doubt,
They leave us where we firſt ſet out.

CHURCHILL.

I have been ſo long fatigued with this *logomachy*, this trifling and evaſive language in your prefaces, that I am quite ſick of it.—

What are the grounds we have, for believing the divine legation of Moſes?—The very ſame that we have, for believing the divine inſpiration of Holy Scripture in general.—And I beg your readers to remember once for all, that divine legation, or divine inſpiration, in regard of Moſes, is one and the ſame thing. His law and his hiſtory are ſo "ſingularly interwoven," ſo inſeparably connected, that if we diſpute the interpoſition of a divine agency, to which he ſolemnly appeals, in the one,—we muſt diſpute it in the

the other; we muſt deny the authority of both ¶: and your readers will obſerve, that the diſtinction which you affect to introduce, between the law of Moſes and the hiſtorical facts attending that law, is frivolous and vexatious *.

Let us examine your ſtatement of the matter.—"The firſt argument," you ſay, "which the ſticklers for the ſtumbling "block † of inſpiration, or the abettors of "that deluſive doctrine, injurious ‡ to the "Supreme Being, allege, is this: that the "Jews of all times have firmly believed "all thoſe books which are in the Hebrew "canon, to be, without exception and in "every part, divinely inſpired §."——

Indeed, Sir, I think there is ſome weight in this argument, if it be founded on certain fact; eſpecially with regard to the Pentateuch. And a Right Reverend Prelate (whoſe ſincerity you have, as uſual, thought proper to ſuſpect ‖, becauſe it did

¶ This was the conceſſion even of Lord Bolingbroke. "I muſt accept or reject the whole," ſays his Lordſhip. Vol. iii. p. 280.

* See 2d Pref. p. iv. † P. xiii.

‡ P. v. § Ibid. ‖ P. ii.

not

not ſerve your purpoſe to believe him ſincere), a Right Rev. Prelate has affirmed, from a confeſſion of faith which the Jews at this day admit,—that they all do believe the authenticity and genuineneſs (and conſequently the inſpiration) of the Pentateuch. "The doctrine and prophecy of "Moſes is true——The law that we have "was given by Moſes. This is the faith "of the Jews at preſent,—it has been their "faith ever ſince the deſtruction of their "city and temple *."——

But unluckily for your thirty years labour, your ſtatement is captious and deluſive. It is a mere rhetorical flouriſh.—The firſt argument, on which we ground our belief of the divine legation, or divine inſpiration, of Moſes, is not the faith of the Jews; and much leſs "the teſtimonies "of Ariſtæas, Philo, Joſephus, and the "Talmudiſts," as you proceed to ſtate. No, Sir, I was grieved to read in your

* Apology for the Bible, p. 45.—The curious reader may conſult a publication entitled, The Phœnix, (printed in 1707) containing "A narrative of the "proceedings of a great council of Jews, aſſembled "in Hungary, in the year 1650."

work,

work, that you imputed to us ſo lame a juſtification of our principles: and am ſometimes tempted to think, that the reverend author muſt have felt the weakneſs of his reaſoning, and have ſeen the futility of it.——

All "the high authoritative arguments," which, with truly philoſophic "temperance "and charity," you ſay, "will be urged, "and have been repeatedly urged, from "the above mentioned bigoted *, phari-"ſaical, impudent Jewiſh writers," are little or nothing to the purpoſe.—You have "briefly reviewed and examined them," in four or five quarto pages †, and you have loſt your time.—You have carried on grammatical quibbles likewiſe, upon a text from "the goſpel of John," upon another from "the apoſtle Peter," and upon a third from the apoſtle Paul, ("who on this occa-"ſion," you ſay, "as on ſome other occa-"ſions, ſpoke the prejudices of the Jews ‡, "or availed himſelf of thoſe prejudices "to enforce his doctrine"), through two pages more; and you have loſt your time.

* 2d Pref. p. viii. † Pp. vi. vii. viii. &c.
‡ P. xi.

—I

—I ſhall not cite all the texts here. They are well known to confirm the inſpiration of the Bible, and we have equally ſolid reaſons for keeping thoſe texts in their preſent form, as we have for retaining the ſenſe already given them, founded upon the preſcription and the learning of eighteen centuries.—When we read in the new teſtament, that * *prophecy was not brought by human will at any time: but the holy men of God ſpoke as they were inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt*; when we read, that *all ſcripture is divinely inſpired*, or *is given by the inſpiration of God*; and infer, that therefore we believe the old teſtament to be divinely inſpired; you may ſneer, and cry out, in the language of Sterne, "Admirable infe-"rence †!"—But *your ſneers* will never diſprove the juſtneſs of that inference.——

In quoting the laſt mentioned text ‡ from St. Paul, in Greek, when you deſcant upon

* ȣ γαρ θεληματι ανθρωπȣ ηνεχθη ποτε προφητεια, αλλ' υπο πνευματος αγιȣ φερομενοι ελαλησαν οι αγιοι θεȣ ανθρωποι. 2 Pet. 1. v. 21.

† 2d Pref. p. x.

‡ πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

the

the little ſubſtantive Greek verb εστι, *is*, not being "placed between γραφη and θεοπνευστος, "*ſcripture* and *inſpired*;"—when you diſpute upon the Greek articles η and αι, and the copulative και, and from that diſpute pretend to cut away the cable, and ſink "the ſheet anchor * of all thoſe Chriſtian "commentators, who defend the univerſal "inſpiration of the Hebrew writings:"—you ſeem, to me, to have borrowed your ideas from a little jocular piece of wit, in Lucian's Dialogues, called Δικη Φωνηεντων, or, *The trial of the vowels*.—Such a fuſs you make about a common *ellipſis*, which "every "Greek ſcholar muſt, at firſt glance, per-"ceive;" where "the little ſubſtantive "Greek verb εστι" is ſo naturally underſtood, that in a thouſand ſimilar phraſes, among the beſt authors, we find it omitted.

You reproach "the apoſtle Paul with "expreſſing his meaning, in a very vague, "uncouth, and ungrammatical manner †." —I am not ſurpriſed at it. You are too much occupied with grammars and dictionaries, to recollect, that the apoſtle Paul

* 2d Pref. p. x.

came

came not in loftineſs of ſpeech — declaring — the teſtimony of God — but in making known the ſpirit *, which you are unwilling to acknowledge in Holy Scripture, but aſcribe to the "prejudices of the Jews; of which "St. Paul availed himſelf," you ſay, "to "enforce his doctrine †."—Read St. Peter and St. Paul again. You will find their doctrine ſupported by that of Jeſus himſelf, whoſe *words are ſpirit and life* ‡, which no grammatical ingenuity can evade: *And beginning from Moſes, and all the prophets,*

* 1 Cor. 2. v. 1, 4.

† To palliate this reproachful language the Doctor aſſures us, in his uſual paradoxical ſtyle, "It never "has yet been proved, or attempted to be proved, "but by *violent induction*, that St. Paul, or any other "of the apoſtles or evangeliſts, always ſpoke and "wrote by *inſpiration properly ſo called*. No, they ſpoke "and wrote from more unexceptionable documents: "from what they had ſeen and heared, &c.—or, in "fine, what was occaſionally *communicated to them by* "*immediate revelation*."

Is the Doctor ſincere, in this *laſt conceſſion?*—After ſo much abuſe of the ſcriptures, as we have ſeen in his writings, can *he* believe any part of them to be *communicated by immediate revelation of God?*—See 2d Pref. p. xi.

‡ St. John c. 6. v. 64.

he (Jeſus) *interpreted to them in all the ſcriptures, the things concerning himſelf.*——*Theſe are the words which I* (Jeſus) *ſpoke to you, when I was yet with you, that all things muſt needs be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moſes, and in the prophets, and pſalms of me. Then he opened their minds, that they might underſtand the ſcriptures* *.—How *ſuch*

* St. Luke, c. 24. v. 27, 44, 45. "I ſhould wiſh "to know by what mood or figure" the Doctor can evade the above mentioned plain texts, and deny, that "Chriſt himſelf, and his apoſtles, bear the ſame teſti- "mony to the inſpiration of the ſcriptures." He acknowledges, nay, "it is evident," he ſays, "that "Chriſt alludes to the prophecies concerning himſelf, "contained in thoſe writings; and uſes an home "argument, in his own favour, againſt the unbeliev- "ing Jews."—He ſhould remember, that Chriſt *interpreted* to his diſciples *in all the ſcriptures* (εν πασαις ταις γραφαις) *the things concerning himſelf*; and that therefore "it is evident," Chriſt, I will not ſay, "thought and believed," (as the Doctor moſt philo- ſophically and, if I may uſe the word, moſt *unchriſ- tianly* expreſſes himſelf,—in attempting to diſpute the fact), but the ſame adorable Perſonage *knew*, and *declared*, "the hiſtorical parts of the Hebrew ſcrip- "tures" to be "divinely inſpired" as well as the reſt; and has confirmed our belief in both.

But I beg the Doctor's pardon. He is a philoſo- pher.——See 2d Pref. p. x.

things

things could be written in the *law of Moſes*, and *in the prophets*, and *in the pſalms*, and in all *the ſcriptures*, ſo many ages before hand, without divine inſpiration to guide all the ſcriptures,—is a myſtery which you have not yet unravelled.

No, Sir, I repeat it, you have really loſt your time and your labour. The "teſti-" monies of Ariſtæas, Philo, Joſephus, and " the Talmudiſts," may, perhaps, be occaſionally "urged," as a collateral ſupport; and grammatical criticiſm may, now and then, be uſeful; but they have not the power to *open* our *minds*, that we may *underſtand the ſcriptures*: they have no more weight with us, as a primary argument for the divine principles of Moſes, than your *pretty ſtory*, about the converſion and reconverſion of the good woman, is a primary argument with you, for Preſbyterianiſm or Popery.—" From a Papiſt," you ſay, " ſhe " became a violent Preſbyterian, becauſe " ſhe was informed by her zealous huſband, " that Papiſts impiouſly aſcribe holineſs to " the Pope, which belongs only to God; " and ſhe returned to the boſom of old " Mother Church, when you charitably in-

"terpoſed and explained *."—She might do ſo.—But your interpoſition *here* is of a very different nature. We might "boggle" at the divine inſpiration of the Pentateuch, with much greater appearance of reaſon than ſhe had to "boggle" even at Popery. Our difficulties would be inſuperable, if the motives of our belief were as "ſlight "and inſignificant" as you repreſent them. "Chriſtians" might then be reckoned "credulous beyond credibility †."——

Let me edify your readers by ſtating "what you learned," upon this head, as well as they, "in your years of pupillage, "and what, you confeſs, you cannot alto-"gether forget."—Indeed, Sir, the arguments you then heared were too ſtriking, to eſcape your memory; and too ſimple, to be miſunderſtood.

When you were taught the divine legation of Moſes, it was not from "exquiſite "ſamples of Jewiſh impudence ‡;"—it was not from the aſſertion of "ſome Jews, who "lived four thouſand years after the moſt "remote period of their *pretended* hiſtory,

* 2d Pref. p. vii. † P. xi. ‡ P. v.

"or

"or mythology; — 1400 years after the "death of Moſes*;"—I ſhould think it very little leſs than *impudence* to aſſert ſuch a thing;—in a word, it was not from the teſtimonies of ancient or modern Rabbies, "thoſe retailers of traditional abſurdi- "ties;"—I appeal to your own conſcience. The arguments you then heared were founded upon the authority of God himſelf,—manifeſted by "a number of prodi- "gies," which you then piouſly believed; but which you now affect to call "incre- "dible;"—evinced by "a frequent inter- "poſition of the Deity and his agents," which you then contemplated with awe and reſpect; but which, from "a ſlight acquaint- "ance with the genius of the eaſtern nations "and their idioms," in a dead language, and at the diſtance of between four and five thouſand years, you now tell us, "it is not "neceſſary to admit†;" and you are preparing a long general preface to explain them away, upon no other authority than that of your own heated imagination.—So true it is, that

* 2d Pref. p. iii. † P. xiii.

Wit talks moſt, when leaſt ſhe has to ſay,
And reaſon interrupts not her career.
She'll ſay—that miſts above the mountains riſe,
And with a thouſand pleaſantries amuſe:
She'll ſparkle, puzzle, flutter, raiſe a duſt,
And loſe conviction in the duſt ſhe raiſed.—

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Permit me, Sir, to commune with you ſeriouſly upon this important topic.—If the marvellous facts recorded in the Pentateuch, which give you and every modern philoſpher ſo much offence, are really "incredible*;"—or if they were the work of

* The muſings of Dr. Geddes and Lord Bolingbroke, upon the Bible, are ſo perfectly ſimilar, that the one may be taken for a *copy* of the other. Let the reader judge from the following ſamples.

"It is true, faſhionable ſcholars will meet with an "*incredible* number of prodigies in the Hebrew ſcriptures, which they need not literally believe; and a "moſt frequent interpoſition of the Deity and his "agents, which it is not neceſſary to admit." Dr. Ged. 2d Pref. p. xiii. —"The hiſtory of the Old "Teſtament is founded in *incredibility*. Almoſt every "event in it is *incredible*." We are "tranſported "into a ſort of fairy-land, where every thing is done "by magic and enchantment." Eſſays of Lord Bolingbroke, vol. iii. p. 280.

"May

of *credulity* and *impoſture*, (which is the ſame kind of thing); the impoſture could only have been effected, in one or other of theſe ways: it muſt either have originated with Moſes himſelf, or with the Jews—during his life;—or elſe it muſt have been the

"May we not conſider the" (Moſaical) "hiſtory of "the fall" (of man) "as an excellent *mythologue* to "account for the origin of *human evil?*" Dr. Ged. 1ſt Pref. p. xi.—"It may not ſeem improbable that "this allegory *might be* invented—to ſignify the intro-"duction of *phyſical* and *moral evil* into the world." Lord Boling. p. 302.

"It is impoſſible, I think, to read the Jewiſh hiſtori-"ans not to diſcover in them evident marks of human "*fallibility* and human *error*." Dr. Ged. 2d Pref. p. v.—"There are *groſs defects* and *palpable falſhoods* "in almoſt every page of the ſcriptures." Lord Boling. p. 298.

"I am rather willing to ſuſpect, that this *ſanginary* "*meaſure*" (the deſtruction of the Chanaanites, Deuteron. c. 20.) "is the fabrication of ſome poſteriour "Jew, to juſtify the *cruelties* of his *nation*." Dr. Ged. 2d Pref. p. ii.—"The truth is, that ignorance and "ſuperſtition, pride, *injuſtice* and *barbarity* were the "peculiar characteriſtics of this people.—Thus much "is certain, that the ſame ſpirit breathes through the "whole *(Jewiſh hiſtory)* and that the character of "*the nation* appears evidently in every part of the "compoſition." Lord Boling. p. 283.

reſult

reſult of a mutual agreement among the people, after the death of their leader, to have theſe *extraordinary events* inſerted in the Pentateuch, from motives of policy, to attract the admiration of their neighbours.—For you will not ſuppoſe, that Moſes, or the Jews, were bent upon impoſture, merely for the *ſake* of impoſture!—You will not ſuppoſe, that they would all agree to commit themſelves, with no farther proſpect of advantage, than the embelliſhment of an *ingenious narrative:* and "no "one, in his ſenſes, would have thought of "ſuch a thing as a *poſterior* * *forgery of the* "*law*, which was compiled," you ſay, "with "great judgment, and with a *more than ordi-* "*nary knowledge of the human heart*†.—A "forger would not have adapted his laws "to continually ariſing contingencies and "circumſtances; but have ſubmitted cir-"cumſtances and contingencies to his pre-"conceived laws‡."—I thank you for the obſervation.—

Fas eſt et ab hoſte doceri.

We will examine theſe points ſeparately

* 1ſt Pref. p. xii. † P. xiii. ‡ P. xii.

and

and diſtinctly, that the public may judge, whether your ſentiments or mine, have the greater appearance of truth; and whether your *pupillage* has been much improved upon, by the ſudden blaze of philoſophic light,—and the ſublime efforts of *Gallic liberty*, with which you have long been ſo much enamoured *.——

In the firſt place, Moſes appeals to the whole Jewiſh nation, with whom he had lived more than forty years,—and whoſe genealogy he had minutely deſcribed, with every remarkable circumſtance, from the beginning down to the period in which he wrote. He atteſts them as eye-witneſſes to many of the facts he relates.—And can you believe, that Moſes could perſuade the whole Hebrew nation, that they had ſeen great and palpable prodigies, if they really had ſeen none?—Could he perſuade them, for example, that all Egypt was covered with darkneſs, during the ſpace of three

* "I will not be dictated to—I am a ſworn enemy "to implicit faith, as well as to implicit obedience— "I wiſh that no church eſtabliſhments had ever been "made—I will, &c. &c. &c."—Dr. Ged. late Addreſs, p. 1, 2. and p. 21, &c.

days;

days; that they had paſſed through the Red Sea upon dry land; that ſix hundred thouſand perſons had quenched their thirſt, with water miraculouſly flowing from a rock; that they had heared the "thunder-"ings and the trumpet-like ſound," as you expreſs it; that they "ſaw the lightenings, "and mount Sinai ſmoking," when they received the law; that they cried out to Moſes: "We have ſeen, that God may "converſe with a man who may yet live.— "Lo! the Lord hath ſhewed to us his great "glory; and his voice we have heared: "report thou to us; and we will hearken "and execute; but let not God ſpeak to "us *, leſt we die?"—Could he perſuade a whole people, that theſe were real facts, if, at the ſame time, they were only *mythological fictions?*——

Should you have recourſe, again, to "your ſlight acquaintance with the "genius of the eaſtern nations and their "idioms," (an acquaintance, which, I hope, you will not arrogate to yourſelf as your excluſive privilege)—this will not ſolve

* Exod. c. xx. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

the

the difficulty.—Your readers will not take it for granted, upon the ſurmiſe of a curious linguiſt (however ſkilful) that ſix hundred thouſand perſons were ſo eaſily duped. "Faſhionable ſcholars, and ſons of ſci-"ence," will not give up their underſtanding to believe, upon your authority, that a ſingle individual, though *inſtructed in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians*, could faſcinate the ſenſes of ſo vaſt a multitude, during the ſpace of forty years ſucceſſively!——

No, Sir, it muſt be acknowledged as the foundation of all human certitude, that mankind in general are not *fools*,—whatever language, whatever phraſeology they may adopt;—and that, though we may now and then be deceived, there are certain principles in human nature, which no figures of ſpeech can elude, and which we cannot depart from,—unleſs totally bereft of reaſon!—The impoſture then does not appear to have originated with Moſes.

In the ſecond place, as to the Jews, however "ſimple, carnal, and phariſaical" they might be,—they were "ſtubborn, tur-"bulent and diſorderly," by your own conceſſion.—And can you think, that men of ſuch

ſuch a temper, and of ſuch habits, would ſet up an artful, ſelfiſh, ruler over their own heads, and implicitly bow to his imperious mandates?—Were they proper ſubjects to be entruſted with *pious frauds*, and to be the retailers of *fictitious prodigies*?—What? Sir, in a tumultuous crowd of ſix hundred thouſand perſons,—where there muſt have been ſuch variety of ages, characters, and propenſities,—was there no "man of "common-ſenſe and ſagacity?" was there no one capable of diſcovering fraud, nor willing to divulge it?—When they ſo often quarrelled with their leader; when they became ſo "ſtubborn, turbulent and diſ-"orderly," as to murmur and revolt againſt him; when he publicly, repeatedly, and ſeverely, reproached them with the moſt flagrant and abominable crimes, which reproaches he perpetuated, in ſome meaſure, by committing thoſe crimes to writing in "a *law-ſong book* *, with the charge of "having it read, at the end of every ſeventh "year, on the feaſt of booths,—before all "Iſrael;"—when they where condemned and executed, by thouſands, for a ſlight

* Deuteron. c. xxxii. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

infringe-

infringement of his hard and oppreſſive law; were they all ſo panic ſtruck at the authority, which they had given to their leader, that they durſt not take it from him? What am I ſaying? — Would they have ſuffered an idol of their own erecting to ſupport his exorbitant power, at the expence of their reputation, their liberties, and their lives?——

I am ready to allow, that miracles may have been fabricated, in every age, for the purpoſe of deceiving mankind. But I cannot allow, that, in any age, they have been permitted to go ſo far without detection; nor can you allow it yourſelf.—The fact is, that the miracles of Moſes were widely different, in every circumſtance, from thoſe that may have been forged. They were not whiſpered in ſecret; they were not performed in the dark, and brought forth to public notice by degrees. They were many of them wrought in the face of two whole nations, whoſe eyes and whoſe ears might immediately judge of the truth. Here is the origin of that paſſive obedience, which the Jews paid to Moſes. They had permanent, as well as ocular, teſ-

timonies of his divine miſſion. And it ſhould be particularly remembered, that inſtitutions were founded, and ceremonies eſtabliſhed upon the occaſion, and in memory, of thoſe events, at the very time, and often upon the ſame ſpot, where they took place.—This you know perfectly well. Such was the annual ſacrifice of the paſchal lamb, (which you have ludicrouſly called the *ſkip-offering*); ſuch were the dedication of the firſt born,—the miniſtry of Levites,—the tabernacle itſelf,—the feaſt of booths, &c.: inſtitutions and ceremonies, which were continued till the coming of the Meſſiah; and ſome of which remain even to this day.——Should any well informed man, after attentively reading the Bible, ſtill ſuſpect, that the marvellous occurrences, recorded in the Pentateuch, were the work of "exceſſive credu- "lity, or deſigned impoſture," on the part of the Jews; ſhould he ſtill contend, that they perplex his mind with doubts, and "need not literally be believed,"—were he any other man than Dr. Geddes, in lieu of diſputing, I ſhould be tempted to anſwer him in the words of La Motte:

Pour

Pour nous la verité ſe couvre d'un nuage;
Mais enfin des mortels tout n'eſt pas ignoré,
Le doute, qui ſouvent, eſt la marque du ſage,
L'eſt du fou, quand il eſt outré.——

LETTER IV.

Continuation of the foregoing ſubject—The Jews not hypocrites from motives of policy; as many things recorded of them, in the Pentateuch, would have expoſed them to hatred, contempt and ridicule—Palpable contradiction of Dr. Geddes, in reckoning the Hebrew hiſtorians beneath Herodotus, Thucydides, and Salluſt—Eccentric notions reſpecting the author of the Pentateuch, and the time of its firſt publication—His aſſertions impertinent, and impious—contrary to the New Teſtament—contrary to his own verſion of the Old Teſtament—repugnant to common ſenſe, and experience—Expoſtulation and concluſion.

AS to an agreement among the Jews, after the death of their leader, to inſert the marvellous facts we read in the

books of Geneſis and Exodus, from motives of policy, in order to attract the admiration of their neighbours,—which was the third point propoſed to be conſidered,—it is ſo weak an objection, it has ſo little appearance of plauſibility, that I am aſhamed to anſwer it. However, as you repeatedly inſinuate ſuſpicions of this nature, which involve the queſtion, whether Moſes were the author of the writings aſcribed to him; they ſhall not paſs unnoticed: I will try them, upon the principles of common ſenſe and experience, that your readers may ſee if they are not repugnant to both.

From your own doctrine we learn, that, during the ſpace of three thouſand years at leaſt, the Pentateuch has been in the hands of a numerous people; that it was the object of their continual ſtudy, and the ground work of a religion, which taught them to love truth, and to hate lies and impoſture.

Now can any perſon of common information believe this, and at the ſame time perſuade himſelf, that they would unanimouſly agree to admit, ſupport and propagate a poſthumous hiſtory, which they knew

to

to be *apocryphal*; a hiſtory interwoven with a code of painful laws and ordinances, which make the ſlighteſt diſobedience a capital crime, without one of them or their deſcendants, in the lapſe of ſo many ages, being found to betray the ſecret?—What more could they have done, had they really and upon "full conviction" believed thoſe writings to be of *divine origin*?—What more could they have done, had they believed the laws of Moſes "to be the "immediate offspring of God?"——

Beſides, if, after the death of their leader, they had formed ſuch an agreement at home;—it would have expoſed them to contempt and ridicule abroad.—They would have had more reaſon to expect hatred and averſion, than eſteem and admiration, from their neighbours.—What muſt their Egyptian neighbours have thought and ſaid, for example, had they heared and ſeen a *fabulous* account of plagues, with which they were publicly reported to have been ſtruck by Moſes; of their rivers being turned into blood; of their firſt born children being killed in one night; of their king, with his whole army, being drowned

in the Red Sea? an event which was celebrated in a ſolemn canticle, ſaid to have been compoſed upon the ſpot.—Could the Egyptians connive at and favour the diſperſion of ſuch *fables* as theſe, ſo injurious to their honour?—Were they alſo in the ſecret?—When the author of the Pentateuch "borrowed many of his religious "rites and ceremonies from the Egyp-"tians, and perhaps, from the Midianites, "(which is not now a queſtion," you ſay, "among the learned *)"—did he borrow their ſenſes from them too?—Did the Egyptians forego their national pride, out of compliment to their enemies;—to flatter "a groſs and carnal people," who had formerly been their ſlaves?—Or were the Egyptians and Midianites averſe to glory, in proportion as the Jews became ridiculouſly fond of it?——

You are a philoſopher. "In an eager "deſire to diſcover truth, you will not "yield the palm to any man†." As mere "hiſtorians, you really" did "reckon the

* 1ſt Pref. p. xiii.

† Dr. Ged. late Addreſs, p. 1.

"Hebrew

"Hebrew hiſtorians with Herodotus, Thu-
"cydides and Salluſt;" now "you rather
"rank them ſomewhat lower, as mere hiſ-
"torians——It would," you ſay, (in oppo-
ſition to what you told us in your firſt pre-
face, as if it was for the pleaſure of contra-
dicting yourſelf), "it would, indeed, be
"unfair to weigh them in the ſame ſcale*;"
and we know, I preſume, that theſe
pagan authors have written ſome fabulous
accounts.—But you will not find it an eaſy
taſk, to point out an hiſtorian, who publiſh-
ed a *volume* of fables, when he wrote with
"an eager deſire" to be ſeriouſly believed;
and when there were witneſſes, compoſed
of whole nations implicated in the ſerious

* 2d Pref. p. xii. In direct oppoſition to his pompous eulogy (1ſt Pref. p. i.) which, after preſſing faſhionable ſcholars to compare the Pentateuch with the beſt writings of antiquity, he concludes in theſe words: "I will venture to ſay, "that if the taſte of the comparer have not been "previouſly vitiated by modern meretricious "refinements, he will be induced to give Moſes "either a decided preference" (even before Plato as well as the above mentioned writers), "or an "equal praiſe."—The diſtinction of "*mere* hiſto-"ans" is evidently a *mere* evaſion.

truth,

truth, or notorious falſehood of his narrative.——

You are fond of building up hypotheſes. Put the caſe, that after the Moors were driven out of Spain, (as they were a few centuries ago) a fabulous and poſthumous account of their adventures had been publiſhed, in which was inſerted a ſolemn canticle, written with the greateſt ſimplicity and the moſt impoſing air of conviction, atteſting heaven and earth, and calling upon the whole people to witneſs, that their eſcape from their enemies, and their return to Africa, was effected by means equivalent to thoſe recorded in the Pentateuch; that they had marched through the Mediterranean Sea upon dry ground,—while an army of fifty or eighty thouſand Spaniards, in purſuit of them, were ſwallowed up and buried in the waves, *and not one of them was preſerved.*—Is it poſſible to conceive, that any ſociety of men would give implicit credit to ſuch a fable,—would hand it down to poſterity, as a miraculous interpoſition of divine providence,—and that neither the Spaniards, nor the neighbouring nations, would

would take notice of ſo groſs an inſult upon their ſenſes?——

But "the Hebrew hiſtorians," you ſay, "who relate theſe and the like events, "have a great reſemblance to Homer. "Like him, they are continually blending "real facts with fanciful mythology, aſcrib-"ing natural events to ſupernatural cauſes. "——The ſame profuſion of metaphors *, "the

* If the ſacred penmen are blamable for their "profuſion of metaphors," and their "groteſque "imagery;" what muſt an intelligent reader think of that ſtrange profuſion of metaphors, and that wild confuſion of images, with which the learned Doctor's writings abound?——

What muſt be ſuch a reader's feelings, for example, when he ſees "calumny going ſtark-naked, "with a running *conflagration*," eſcorted by "de-"mons, friarized upholſterers and coffee-houſe "loungers, warm from the hot regions of the in-"quiſition, to *bedawb* the Rev. Doctor's character; "to make good Catholics believe, that he was "ſeen, in broad day-light, going to officiate in an "Engliſh chapel, in his caſſoc and ſurplice; and "then *lug* him forth by head and ſhoulders, to "Newgate or the Tower?"—What muſt he think "of *Siſyphus* and *Hercules*; ſores and choke-pears; "knives

"the ſame garrulous tautology pervade "them both: in both," you ſay, "we meet "with a *poetical hiſtory*, the effuſion of a "warm imagination, tracing with boldneſs "inaccurate reſemblances between the ope- "rations of nature, and the petty artifices "of men *".—To make their reſemblance to Homer more complete, you tell us, "they "were rude and unpoliſhed writers; they "wrote in a rude age, in a poor uncultivated language, with ruſtic ſimplicity and

"knives and cauteries; paint and patches; cha- "thartics and ſtrengtheners; rolling ſtones and "tides, &c." all employed to *mend the Britiſh conſtitution?*——

I am as "unwilling to ſay any thing uncivil or "ſevere" of Dr. Geddes, as he is to ſay ſuch things of the Jewiſh writers. "He *is* ſurely a "learned man."—But what muſt a "faſhionable "ſcholar" think of "ſtaunch republicaniſm, Whig- "iſm, and high-bred Tory parentage, *grappling* "with Biſhops and Popes," to defend a *philoſophic tranſlation* and a *fabulous interpretation* of the Holy Bible, of which "not one ſingle text is "*thwarted* †?"——

† See the Doctor's late Addreſs paſſim, and his polite Letter to the Vicars Apoſtolic.

* 2d Pref. p. xii.

"groteſque

"groteſque imagery." Moreover, "you "find in them, to your *full conviction*, marks "of error and inconſiſtency, not to ſay "downright abſurdity *." They "appear "inexplicable, and ſometimes ridiculous †." And what is ſtill more wonderful, notwithſtanding the unpoliteneſs, the ruſticity, the abſurdity, the ridiculouſneſs of which you complain, "it appears to you indubitable "from intrinſic evidence, that the Penta-"teuch, in its preſent form," (the foremoſt in rank, and the firſt in importance of all the Hebrew ſcriptures) "was not written "by Moſes ‡. It was written in the land "of

* 2d Pref. p. xi. † P. xiii.

‡ If "the Pentateuch, in its preſent form, was "not written by Moſes,"—if "it could not be writ-"ten before the reign of David," or was not written till the "reign of Solomon;" its form can only be accounted for upon one of theſe two ſuppoſitions: either that all the Jewiſh rites, ceremonies and ſacrifices, together with *the Ark and the Tabernacle*, (which are the foundation of their religion), were invented in the reign of Solomon,—and then eſtabliſhed, upon the firſt publication of the Pentateuch;—or elſe that the Pentateuch was collected by degrees, from traditional documents, and at length

"of Chanaan, and *moſt probably* at Jeruſa-
"lem.—It *could not be written* before the
"reign of David, nor after that of Heze-
"kiah.

length publiſhed, in the reign of Solomon, adapted to the practices and obſervances then in uſe.

But can any perſon, who has attentively read the Bible, imagine, that theſe five books were then firſt compoſed, that the Ark and the Tabernacle were then introduced, *all at once*, with ſuch a prodigious number of burthenſome rites and ceremonies, "borrowed from the Egyptians and, perhaps, from "the Midianites,"—and that they were then immediately and univerſally received, as things already known?—Or, if theſe books were collected by degrees, at different periods,—can any one imagine, that, in proportion as they were collected, they had a *retroactive* effect, (if I may uſe that word) upon the mind of the Hebrew nation, to make them admit and venerate, the whole ritual, in the reign of Solomon, "borrowed from the Egyptians and, "perhaps, from the Midianites," as the *genuine work* of Moſes?—Could they perſuade themſelves, that their laws and ordinances had been in force from the days of Moſes, as they have believed in every age ſince, and that their prieſts were the ſucceſſors of Aaron, without proof, or rather knowing the whole to be falſe?——

To

" kiah. The long pacific reign of Solomon
" (the Auguſtan age of Judæa) in the
" period to which you would refer it. Yet,
you

To argue upon the ſame premiſes, would the other tribes have ſuffered themſelves to be excluded from the ſacerdotal functions, during ſo many hundred years? Would they have allowed the ſons of Levi, and the race of Aaron, to enjoy all the prerogatives annexed to thoſe functions, and to the dignity of High Prieſt;—if theſe prerogatives had been uſurped, or had no other origin than *human policy?*

The *firſt ſuppoſition*, I think, refutes itſelf, from the moral impoſſibility of the fact.—Neither is the *ſecond* admiſſible, on account of the contradiction which would, in that caſe, be evident.—For we read, (Exod. c. 34. v. 27, 28.) *The Lord ſaid to Moſes: write thee theſe words by which I have made a covenant with thee and with Iſrael——and he* (Moſes) *wrote upon the tables the ten words of the covenant*; which had likewiſe been confirmed in another chapter (Exod. 24. v. 4.) *And Moſes wrote all the words of the Lord.*

If then the Jews had only received the law by *oral tradition*, could they admit a book, publiſhed for the firſt time at ſo late a period as the reign of Solomon, and *firmly believe that book to be of divine origin*, which contained ſo groſs and palpable

"you confeſs, there are ſome marks of a "poſterior date, or at leaſt of poſterior "interpolation." *——Then you correct yourſelf. "Moſes" (after all) "*moſt probably* "was the firſt who applied himſelf to hiſto- "rical compoſition. From his journals, a "great part of the Pentateuch," you ſay, "ſeems to have been compiled. He cer- "tainly *may* have drawn the whole or a "part of his coſmogony and general hiſ- "tory, both before and after the deluge, "from the archives of Egypt." Yet, in the next line, you return again to your former opinion. "It is poſſible, and" without alleging any other reaſon, "you think "*more probable*, that the firſt collection of "the Pentateuch was made in the reign of "Solomon; and that the writer collected "from ſuch documents as he could find,

a falſehood—an expreſs command of the Almighty declared by their legiſlator to have been fulfilled,—but which their legiſlator never had fulfilled?—Could the Jews throughout the world believe that book at preſent?——Let the candid reader decide for himſelf.

* 1ſt Pref. p. xviii.

"either

" either among his own people, or among " the neighbouring nations *."——

Before I reply to this eccentric mode of conveying Biblical inſtruction, I muſt revert to the cloſe of your firſt preface; where you ſay, " there was a time when it " would have been deemed an impertinent, " nay an impious query, to aſk, who was " the author of ſo admirable a work as the " Pentateuch?—For who, it was ſaid, could " be the author of the books of Moſes, but " Moſes himſelf?—Yet this query, appears " to you to have never been *ſufficiently* " anſwered, unleſs injurious language can " be called an anſwer."——I ſhall take the liberty to ſay, (without intending to ſpeak injurious language), that I think the query *impertinent* and *impious* ſtill; eſpecially in the mouth of a " Catholic Chriſ- " tian."—To ſhow its *impertinence*, I might tell you, that had we nothing more to perſuade us of Moſes being the author of the Pentateuch, than that it bears his name,—that it always has been attributed to him, and that till the time of Aben Ezrah (which

* 1ſt Pref. p. xix.

was about five hundred years ago) no one took it into his head to assert the contrary; we could not form a rational doubt upon the matter: since it is only from a similar mode of reasoning, that we believe any ancient book to have been written by the author to whom it is attributed.—To shew the *impiety* of the question, I might say, that over and above the history which bears the *name* of Moses, we have a second narrative, in effect, from the laws and ceremonies, which were religiously observed by the Jews, in every age;—which were honoured by our blessed Redeemer himself, (who frequently quoted both the writings and the name of Moses, as we have seen in the New Testament *),—and which are a perpetual confirmation, for a Christian, both of the genuineness of the books we are speaking of, and of all the marvellous facts therein contained.——I might cite your own version, which assures us, that "Moses "wrote all the dictates of the Lord," by his express command †.—And again, "this

* St. Luke, c. 24.

† Exod. xxiv. and xxxiv. Dr. Ged. Transl.

"law

"law Moſes wrote, and gave it to the "prieſts, the deſcendants of Levi, who had "the care of the ark of the covenant of the "Lord, and to all the elders of Iſrael *."—

But admitting "your conviction" of the contrary,—are you aware, Sir, of the lengths to which "the effuſion of a warm imagina-"tion" hurries you?—Muſt we believe, upon "your conviction," that human underſtanding was ſo uncultivated among the Jews, in the days of Solomon (when the "*poetical hiſtory* of the Pentateuch was "reduced," you ſay, "into its preſent "form)," that the Jews were abſolutely indifferent about *truth* or *falſehood*, *ſenſe* or *nonſenſe*, *honour* or *infamy*? Muſt we believe, upon "your conviction," that their "language was ſo poor," their "tropology "ſo bold, and their poetical images ſo ab-"ſurd" (in the Auguſtan age of Judæa) as to hinder them or their cotemporary neighbours from examining ſuch *poetical hiſtory*; or to prevent them from expreſſing their approbation or diſapprobation of it?—— Will common ſenſe and experience ſup-

* Deuteron. xxxi. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

port you, in this conviction?—Let any "fashionable scholar,"—or "let any one, "of but common sense and sagacity turn" to your prefaces; "and either there or in "the authors whom" you "quote, read "carefully all the various arguments that "have been devised to make the story" of the Pentateuch, or even the testimonial song of Moses, pass for "a *poetical tale*, "worked up into its present form in the "reign of Solomon;" and "when he has "done this, let him lay his hand upon his "heart, and say, if he feel any thing like "conviction.——In his doubts, he may, "indeed, have recourse to the authority "of a supposed infallible" linguist, who taxes the Jewish writers "with rusticity "and absurdity, in their Augustan age;" and with "bigotry and impudence" afterwards; "and if he deem these sufficient "props, he may rely upon them: but, I "think, he will hardly affirm, that he leans "upon the pillar of reason."——

For tell me, Sir, are not the reasoning faculties of mankind by nature inquisitive, when extraordinary works appears, the first time?—Are you not inquisitive on such occasions

occaſions yourſelf? — Have you not declared the Pentateuch to be "an impor-"tant hiſtory, an admirable compoſition, a "model of good writing *?"—And would

* In commenting upon this "model of good "writing," the learned Doctor inceſſantly refers to his "Critical Remarks," which we have never ſeen.——He told us indeed, in the year 1792, (1ſt Pref. p. xxi.), that his "primary deſign was, "*certainly*, to give the Critical Remarks belonging "to each volume, with the volume itſelf: and that "this, in *future*, *would* be his plan;" though he, "on that occaſion deviated from it." But alas! he has ſtill "deviated from his plan," and from his promiſe too.

He *hoped* likewiſe, "in the courſe of the next "year, (which was the year 1793) to lay before "the public the Critical Remarks on both," firſt and ſecond, "volumes," which would "form a *juſt* "*volume* by themſelves; and might be bound up "together, or detached, and affixed, at the *pleaſure* "of the purchaſer, to their reſpective volumes of "the text."—But, after a lapſe of ſeven long years, purchaſers are ſtill left to *hope* for a view of this *juſt volume*; even in the year 1799, they are ſtill to contemplate the *unknown pleaſure* of reading theſe "Critical Remarks" in *future* proſpect!——

Hope ſprings eternal in the human breaſt:
Man never *is*, but always *to be* bleſt.

you

you not be rouſed to reſentment, if a poſthumous "poetical hiſtory" were now collected, compiled and publiſhed in Scotland, in the reign of King George the Third, "an admirable compoſition, a model of "good writing," in which you ſaw your own immediate anceſtors wantonly accuſed of flagrant crimes, and their "character "traduced, calumniated and blackened" with opprobrious anecdotes?—Would you not have reaſon to bounce, if the writer of this "important hiſtory, the higheſt effort "of" Scottiſh "genius invoked heaven and "earth to witneſs, that he knew the rebel-"lious and ſtubborn diſpoſition" of your Catholic Chriſtian forefathers;—that they were "degenerate children,—a genera-"tion perverſe and prevaricating,—peo-"ple fooliſh and infatuated; that they "forſook the God who made them, and "deſpiſed the author of their ſalvation; "that they moved him to jealouſy, by "adoring ſtrange gods," (alluding to the idolatrous worſhip of a golden calf), "that by *their abominations* they provoked "him to anger; that they ſacrificed to

"*dæmons*,

" *demons*, or to gods without *godſhip* * ?"—
You are a patriot, and a man of honour.
Would you ſuffer ſuch a "torrent of illi-
" beral abuſe" to diſgrace your country and
vilify your name, without taking effectual
means to ſtop its courſe?—And is it pro-
bable, that the whole Jewiſh nation would
have borne with this ruſtic language, in "a
" model of good writing, an important hiſto-
" ry, the higheſt effort of Hebrew genius,
" written in a rude age, by rude and unpo-
" liſhed writers," that is to ſay,—"firſt col-
" lected and compiled in the moſt flouriſh-
" ing and felicitous period of their ſtate, in
" the long pacific reign of Solomon?" Is
it probable, that they would have counte-
nanced the numerous and horrid maledic-
tions, which in that "model of good writ-
" ing," were threatened to "come upon
" them, and purſue them, and cleave to
" them; and be upon them and their poſ-
" terity a laſting mark and a ſubject of
" wonder †?"—Is it poſſible, that a whole
nation, in perfect peace and tranquillity,

* Deuteron. xxxii. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

† Ibid. xxviii.

and

and at the ſummit of their glory, with the wiſeſt of kings at their head, would have permitted ſuch humiliating expreſſions to be uſed, merely for the purpoſe of embelliſhing a "*law-ſong book*," or a volume of "*fanciful mythology*," then firſt compiled? Let your "faſhionable ſcholars and your "ſons of ſcience" decide.—I am not writing controverſy; I appeal to *human nature* *; *which is ſtill the ſame.* Do you find "a

* C'eſt une choſe étonnaute, que la loy (de Moyſe) ſe ſoit conſervée durant tant de ſiécles parmy un peuple rebelle et impatient comme celuicy; pendant que tous les autres Etats ont changé de temps en temps leur loix, quoy que tout autrement faciles à obſerver.

Ce peuple eſt encore admirable en ſincerité. Ils gardent avec amour et fidelité le livre où Moyſe declare qu'ils ont toûjours été ingrats envers Dieu, et qu'il ſçait qu'ils le ſeront encore plus après ſa mort ——Cependant ce livre qui les deshonore en tant de façons, ils le conſervent aux depens de leur vie.—C'eſt une ſincerité qui n'a point d'exemple dans le monde, ny ſa racine dans la nature.

Penſées de M. PASCAL, pp. 59, 60.—
Edit. Amſterdam, 1700.

"great

"great reſemblance to Homer," in ſuch paſſages of the Pentateuch?—Does your "ſlight acquaintance with the genius of "eaſtern nations and their idioms," in the eighteenth century, inform you, that "the "long pacific reign of Solomon" required the publication of ſuch diſgraceful anecdotes; or, that the firſt compiler of the books of Moſes, in the reign of Solomon, imagined the glory of his prince would have been imperfect, without repeated invectives againſt the depravity of his people; without

——— foul ſpeeches ———
And *bitter curſes* horrible to tell!
That even the temple ——
Might quake to hear?——

SPENCER's Fairy Queen.

"Bigoted and impudent Jewiſh hiſtori-"ans," of later date, were of a different perſuaſion. They had more faſhionable and ſcientific notions of honour. Indeed, the idolatrous worſhip of the molten calf ſeems to have been ſo mortifying a circumſtance, in the opinion of the courtly Joſephus, that he thought proper to wave the ſubject,—

even

even at the expenſe of his honeſty. He judged it better to incur the reproach of violating the laws of hiſtory, by ſuppreſſing that enormous crime of his "ruſtic" countrymen,—than ſully their fame, perhaps, expoſe them to the danger of contempt and ridicule, among the poliſhed Greeks and Romans, by inſerting it in his works.—— Such crimes, however, are recorded in more than ten paſſages of the Pentateuch, and expreſsly repeated, with additional horrors, in the hundred and fifth pſalm; which I take to be a confirmation of the truth; though you may cavil about the author of that pſalm. —— I have ſtudied "the ſubject with great attention," as well as yourſelf; and it appears to me indubitable, that if ſuch crimes had not been committed by the Jews in the wilderneſs,—if ſuch maledictions had not been denounced againſt the repetition of thoſe crimes, by more than human authority,—if the books which contain theſe maledictions had not been written and publiſhed, many ages before the period you ſpeak of, and been firmly *believed to be of divine origin*;—policy

and

and pride, in the "Auguſtan age of Judæa," would have forbidden and have prevented their publication.—So much for your "in-"trinſic evidence, that the Pentateuch, in "its preſent form, was not written by Mo-"ſes; and that it could not be written "before the reign of David."——So much for your poſſibility, and your greater probability, that "it was written at Jeruſalem, "and that it was firſt compiled in the reign "of Solomon."

Let us once more return to the "ſur-"rounding nations, whoſe worſhip," you ſay, "the Jews were commanded, in the "Pentateuch, to abhor and to evite, as diſ-"graced with every ſpecies of impiety, in-"temperance and debauchery *."—Who were theſe nations?—Was not Solomon *renowned in all the nations?*—Did there not come *from all people to hear the wiſdom of Solomon, and from all kings of the earth* †?—Were not moſt of the ſurrounding nations, at that time, in a civilized, if not in a flouriſhing and proſperous ſtate? Had they not the ſame ſort of intereſts to conſult?

* 1ſt Pref. p. xiv. † 3. Kings, c. 4.

Muſt they not have ſeen what their ſight diſcovered to them?—Muſt they not have felt and expreſſed what human nature would give them to feel and expreſs, had their character been abuſed, and their reaſon inſulted by the *pious frauds*, and *fabulous legends* of knaves and hypocrites, who vainly and impiouſly boaſted of a covenant with the Almighty *, which diſtinguiſhed them from the whole human race?—We find no account of any ſuch reproach being made to the Iſraelites.——As to the little flings and taunts, which occur in Horace: *hodie triceſima ſabbata——vin tu curtis Judæis oppidere——credat Judæus Apella*, &c. &c. they are nothing more than what we daily hear among the thoughtleſs crowd, in the ſtreets of London.—The learned Hugo Grotius has proved, in numberleſs citations, that heathen hiſtorians, and heathen poets, have univerſally corroborated both the narrative and the juriſprudence of Moſes †. His book, upon the truth of the Chriſtian Religion, is common in Latin,

* Exod. c. xxxiv. v. 27. Dr. Ged. Tranſ.

† De veritate Relig. Chriſt. lib. 1. c. 15, 16.

French

French and Engliſh; and every ſuſpicion of *deſigned impoſture* is there refuted.

If theſe arguments make no impreſſion upon your mind, for want of *novelty*,—your "honeſt, open-eyed, Chriſtian readers" will not deſpiſe them, on that ſcore. *Novelty*, in religious matters, is no mark of *truth*.—Your readers have long been accuſtomed to conſider the Pentateuch as containing the hiſtory and law of the Jews, read, at all times and in all countries, with admiration and reſpect. They cannot trace out the origin of this reſpect and this admiration, from your principles; they will therefore abide by the principles of their forefathers. They will believe the *words of Jeſus*, rather than yours, when *beginning from Moſes and all the prophets he interpreted* (to his diſciples) *in all the ſcriptures, the things* (propheſied) *of him* *.—They will continue to believe, that *prophecy came not at any time by human will; but the holy men of God ſpoke as they were inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt* †; and that if Moſes were not one of theſe *holy men*, his writings, inſtead of being

* St. Luke, c. 24. v. 27. † 2. Pet. c. 1. v. 21.

preſerved

preſerved with admiration and reſpect, as they are at this day, would, moſt probably, have been long ſince deſtroyed,—his religion totally aboliſhed,—and his name have been conſigned to oblivion.

I conclude with the pathetic addreſs of an excellent moral poet and Chriſtian divine, who might have done honour to any age:

> Weigh what was urged, Lorenzo, fairly weigh;
> And tell me, haſt thou cauſe to triumph ſtill?
> I think, thou wilt forbear a boaſt ſo bold.
> But if, beneath the favour of miſtake,
> Sincere thy ſmile; not more ſincere can be
> Lorenzo's ſmile, than my compaſſion for him.
>
> NIGHT THOUGHTS—Night 9.

With ſincere reſpect, and with unfeigned wiſhes for your preſent and future happineſs, I bid you adieu.

Spaniſh Place, Mancheſter Square,
April 5, 1799.

JOHN EARLE.

4 AP 65